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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

ARNOLD'S ESSAY ON
WORDSWORTH
WITH
SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS
OF WORDSWORTH

EDITED WITH
INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND QUESTIONS

BY

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PREFACE

Without a knowledge of Wordsworth's poetry the student misses much of the meaning of Matthew Arnold's "Essay on Wordsworth." In this edition, therefore, selected poems from Wordsworth have been included with the essay as affording the best and pleasantest commentary on Arnold's critical study that the student could have. The poems selected, forty-nine in all, are those which are generally acknowledged to represent Wordsworth at his best.

The introductory material prepares the way for an intelligent study of the text by giving the significant facts of the life and times of both poet and essayist. It is hoped that the suggestions for study, including a discussion of certain types of the lyric, as well as questions on the individual poems and on the essay, will help the student to a genuine, even if elementary, appreciation of both poet and critic.



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SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS
OF WORDSWORTH

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

EARLY LIFE

It is doubtful whether surroundings better fitted for the development of a great nature poet could be imagined than the picturesque highlands of Cumberland and Westmoreland as they were a hundred and fifty years ago, with their exquisite blending of mountains, vales, and lakes, and their native population, so simple and unaffected as to seem almost a part of nature.

At Cockermouth, on the western edge of this district, William Wordsworth was born, April 7, 1770. He was the second son of John Wordsworth, law agent of Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. His mother was Anne Cookson, only daughter of a well-to-do mercer of Penrith. "I remember my mother," says the poet, "only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast, when I was going to catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. An intimate friend of hers told me that she once said to her that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William; and he, she said, would be remarkable either for good or for evil. The cause of this was that I was of a stiff, moody and violent temper."

William was eight years old when his mother died. Before this time he had attended a dame-school in Penrith, and he

was now sent with his older brother to a grammar school at Hawkshead, in the beautiful vale of Esthwaite.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale, to which ere long
We were transplanted.

Although this school prepared students for the universities, the program of study does not seem to have been austere. Wordsworth studied Latin and mathematics with success, but made little progress with Greek. The students did not live in dormitories, as at many preparatory schools, but boarded with families in the village and shared their humble domestic life. Outside of school hours they enjoyed a great deal of freedom, and the wide margin thus left to his life proved to be the most important part of the poet's education; for, while he was going hunting or fishing, walking out before daylight to look at the snares he had set for birds, or making his skates ring on the frozen lakes until long after the glow had died out in the west, the beauty and significance of nature under all conditions of varying seasons and changing times of day was gradually filtering into his mind and heart. His perceptions were phenomenally acute, and he was throbbing with the sensuous joy of living, but he had not yet learned to read the deeper meaning of nature as he was able to do in later years.

Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities and all
Their trivial pleasures.

Elsewhere he writes:

I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

In Wordsworth's fourteenth year a different aspect of nature was forced upon his attention. The occurrence was one which has had many parallels in that rigorous northern clime. Wordsworth's father, while traversing a mountainous region, was overtaken by a dense mist in which he wandered about for hours, suffering so much from exposure that he died a few days afterward.

The children thus made orphans were left to the care of their relatives. The father had been a fairly prosperous man, but had lent £5000 to his employer, the Earl of Lonsdale, which this wayward and eccentric man now steadfastly refused to repay. Part of the money left was used up in fruitless efforts to collect the debt. Fortunately, however, Wordsworth was able, with some assistance from his uncles, to continue his education. He completed his preparatory work in 1787, and in October entered St. John's College, Cambridge.

During his four years at the university Wordsworth made no effort to excel in scholarship. Much of his time was spent in idling about with other undergraduates as idle as himself; the remainder was divided between long walks into the country and such studies as especially appealed to him. He studied French, Italian, and Spanish, and read rather widely in the literature, especially the poetry, of our own language. It is said that he never opened a book in mathematics during his stay at Cambridge. In the spring of 1791 he took his degree, but without having won distinction of any kind. He was all his life an independent thinker rather than a great

student of books, and he afterward said that he felt, at this time, that his hour had not yet come.

Wordsworth had an innate love for travel, which he indulged whenever possible. His first summer vacation was spent in tramping over his native mountains; the next, in wandering amid the beautiful scenes of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, often in the company of his sister Dorothy and their cousin Mary Hutchinson. His third vacation was devoted to a pedestrian tour with his college friend, Robert Jones, through France, Switzerland, and the Italian lake country, their return being by way of the Rhine. Although such tours are common for students of today, it is said that they were among the first English students to venture upon such an undertaking.

WORDSWORTH AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

As soon as Wordsworth had finished his course at Cambridge, he settled in London for a few months, apparently undecided what to do next, "pitching an idle tent among the unfenced regions of society." Summer found him touring North Wales with his friend Jones and climbing Mount Snowdon to view the sunrise from its summit. In November he again crossed over to France for an indefinite stay,—drawn thither partly by a desire to improve his knowledge of French and partly by his interest in the stirring political events which were then taking place.

It thus became the young poet's destiny to witness at close range that strange enigma of mob psychology, enacted on a nation-wide scale, known as the French Revolution. His sympathies were soon enlisted with the movement, and revolutionary enthusiasm swept him onward with its feverish tide, filling him with an emotional fervor such as more prosaic eras can scarcely comprehend. The brightness of

the vision of a golden age upon which the world was supposed to be entering is expressed in his famous lines:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!

Alas! how soon were these fair hopes to be overshadowed with doubts and fears! Within a few months began those excesses which were to drench France with blood and make the nations shudder at the spectacle.

When factions began to appear among the Revolutionists, Wordsworth's family became alarmed and, by cutting off his allowance, necessitated his return to England. Had he remained in France he would probably have been sent to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror, along with his Girondist associates.

Although sorely perplexed to understand the violence and brutality which followed in the wake of the Revolution, Wordsworth for a time kept his faith in the validity of democratic principles; and, when England declared war upon the new Republic, he was filled with sorrow and shame. It was only after the intense energies called into being by the struggle to realize the lofty ideal of liberty, equality, and brotherhood had transformed themselves into a lust for conquest that his faith in the Revolution faltered and his hopes died.

CHOOSING A PROFESSION

The years following Wordsworth's return to his native land were years of uncertainty and gloom for him. Disappointment and disillusionment regarding the state of man and society, his own uncertain prospects in life, and the necessity of choosing a vocation when none seemed really suitable for him, all combined to perplex and depress him. The law, the Church, the army, and tutorial work were con-

sidered in turn and dismissed. The only ambition that appealed to his heart was that of being a poet. In 1793 he had published two descriptive poems, but the reception accorded them did not encourage him to believe he could earn his living by poetry alone. The only special merit of these early pieces is their power of exact and vivid description of natural scenery; yet they produced a powerful impression upon the youthful Coleridge, who, with his fine intuition, perceived in them evidences of genius. "Seldom, if ever," he declared, "was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

While Wordsworth was still in this state of indecision and unrest, he made the acquaintance of another young man who formed a high opinion of his latent powers,—a certain Raisley Calvert, from the north of England. The two young friends were much together in 1793 and 1794; and when Calvert fell ill with consumption the following year, Wordsworth nursed him until his death. It was found that he had left Wordsworth a legacy of £900 in order to assist him to devote himself to literature, believing him possessed of gifts and attainments which would be of value to mankind.

DOROTHY

Upon coming into this legacy Wordsworth was able to carry out a long-cherished plan of having his sister Dorothy with him. She was his only sister, and was a year and nine months younger than he. Since childhood they had been separated, except for short visits; but their temperaments were so similar that a deep understanding and sympathy existed between them. Dorothy's letters show her love for William, in preference to any of her other brothers, and speak of him as having "a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the

day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." Again, in the following year, she writes with girlish ardor, to one of her girl friends:

I have strolled into a neighboring meadow, where I am enjoying the melody of birds, and the busy sounds of a fine summer's evening. But oh! how imperfect is my pleasure while I am alone! Why are you not seated with me? and my dear William, why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear *you* point out a spot, where, if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own, we should be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat. Our parlor is in a moment furnished, our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind our house lifts its head and furnishes us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noon-day shade.

Wordsworth's letters to his sister at this time breathe much the same spirit. He writes in 1793:

How much I do wish that each emotion of pleasure or pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or a similar pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have stolen to our little cottage. . . . I will write to my uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas, my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages.

The first abode of Wordsworth and his sister was a cottage at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, where they spent a year and a half. During this period Wordsworth was groping

blindly, not knowing, probably, how close he was to the light that was to guide his destiny. Under Dorothy's healing influence he was being cheered and warmed into quicker sympathy with human life, his aloofness and austerity was being softened into tenderness, and he was meeting with that delicate appreciation and ready enthusiasm for all that was best and most characteristic in his writings which was so much needed to encourage him to entire self-realization. That he appreciated fully how much he owed to this sister, who was willing to merge her own high endowments in his larger being, and who had no ambition but to minister to his subtlest spiritual needs, is shown by numerous passages in which he acknowledges his obligations to her.

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

Wordsworth was not here merely paying a graceful compliment—he felt this to be the literal truth. Henceforth until the close of life the brother and sister lived together, and it has been truly said of them that Wordsworth was the spokesman to the world for two souls.

COLERIDGE

In June, 1797, another powerful influence came into Wordsworth's life in the friendship of a person whom he always placed along with Dorothy as one of the two beings to whom his intellect was most indebted. It is not certain when the Wordsworths first met Coleridge; but his intimate friendship with them dates from the second summer they spent at Racedown. How genius responded to kindred genius can best be told by the words in which they recorded their first lively impressions of one another. Dorothy writes of their guest:

He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind and spirit. . . . At first I thought him very plain, that is for about three minutes. . . . His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but gray—such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of “the poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling” than I have ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead. . . . The first thing that was read was William’s new poem, “The Ruined Cottage”, with which Coleridge was delighted, and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of “Osorio”. The next morning William read his tragedy “The Borderers”.

Coleridge, on his part, was so much impressed with “The Ruined Cottage” as to declare it “superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which in any way resembles it.” Writing to Cottle he stated that he felt himself a little man beside Wordsworth.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, said in after years, “I have known many men who have done wonderful things, but the only wonderful man I ever knew was Coleridge.”

Coleridge’s description of Dorothy Wordsworth enables us to understand why her influence upon her brother was so great.

Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman, indeed!—in mind, I mean, and heart; for her person is such that, if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty; but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly that who saw her would say:

“Guilt was a thing impossible in her.”

Her information various, her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature, and her taste a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in at subtlest beauties, and most recondite faults.

When Coleridge returned to his home at Nether Stowey, he took the Wordsworths with him for a visit, prevailing upon them to move to Alfoxden so as to be near him. Henceforth the three friends were together a great deal of the time, discussing problems of philosophy, considering principles of literary construction, or planning original compositions as they wandered over the Quantock Hills, or went on short pedestrian tours into the adjacent counties. The powerful impetus given by the impact of each mind upon the other is evidenced by the productions of the two poets during this period. Each was raised and exhilarated by the appreciation of the other, and both were kindled for the first time into full and free self-expression. Although both continued for many years to write, neither ever surpassed and Coleridge never again equaled the work produced during the first year of their acquaintance.

THE LYRICAL BALLADS

During their walks together the plan for a joint publication of their poems grew up, and was modified from time to time. The differences in their styles of writing were soon recognized, and it was decided to divide the field between them. "It was agreed," says Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, "that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself, as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the wonders and loveliness of the world before us."

The result of their labors was a thin volume known as *Lyrical Ballads*, published by Cottle, at Bristol, in 1798. Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," representing the supernatural, stood first. On the other hand, the things of every day were represented by a considerable number of Wordsworth's pieces, the best of which are "We are Seven," "The Reverie of Poor Susan," "Simon Lee," "Expostulation and Reply," "The Tables Turned," and "Lines left upon a Yew-Tree Seat." Other poems of his in the same vein, but distinctly inferior to those just mentioned, are "The Idiot Boy," "The Thorn," and "Goody Blake," all of which approach dangerously near the trivial and the commonplace. The volume closed with Wordsworth's grand lyrical outburst in praise of nature entitled "Lines written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," a poem containing the poet's entire philosophy of life in miniature.

A reader of today would suppose that a collection containing poems of such quality as the best of these would have been sure of success, even though written by authors as yet unknown to the world; but the fate of the *Lyrical Ballads* was far different. To begin with, they were in a style too different from anything which had preceded them to give pleasure to the ordinary reader; and, in the second place, their unassuming simplicity was too easily mistaken for commonplaceness by persons who had not the discernment to see the deep significance which lay beneath the surface. Wordsworth soon came to the realization that his poems would have to create the taste by which they were to be enjoyed,—a thing which they were hindered greatly in doing by the arrogant and dictatorial tone of hostile critical journals, such as the *Edinburgh Review*. Nevertheless, truth could not be permanently silenced. Here and there were persons of taste, especially among the younger generation, who were sensible of the incomparable beauty and power of

the work thus inauspiciously put forward; and about these as rallying points gathered an ever-increasing number of adherents, until, in the end, admiration of Wordsworth became as general as detraction had been at first. To effect so great a change required a period of thirty years, and the tardiness of the recognition given must have dulled greatly the pleasure with which it was received.

WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF POETRY

One of the chief causes of the ridicule heaped upon Wordsworth's early poems was the misinterpretation of the preface attached to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, wherein was set forth the theory of poetry upon which they were based. Considering that this exposition was written in the heat of controversy and in some impatience at the blindness of contemporary criticism, it seems remarkable for its moderation and sound judgment; but the views set forth were then so revolutionary as to draw the scoffs and jeers of the reviewers and half-critics who considered themselves the dictators of taste for the age. If it be true, as Addison says, that "censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent," Wordsworth must suddenly have attained pre-eminence. Certain statements in the preface which sound absurd if not considered in connection with qualifications which Wordsworth was careful to make, were quoted without giving the context, and held up to derision. This was manifestly unfair, and can be pardoned only on the ground that the critics mistook incidental details for the central idea intended by the author.

In this much discussed document Wordsworth says that the *Lyrical Ballads* were written as an experiment to determine what effects can be produced "by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state

of vivid sensation." Farther on he states that his principal object "was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men. . . . Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language." Since "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," he proposes to make "the feelings developed give importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feelings." He regards the public taste as "depraved," in having lost the power to enjoy simple incidents simply treated, and assails the "craving after extraordinary incident" and the thirst for "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse." He wishes to make his incidents and situations interesting "by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our natures." Reverting again to the question of style, Wordsworth says, "It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." This is the statement which aroused the critics to their highest pitch of antagonism, and which seemed to offer the best point for their attacks. What Wordsworth means, as is apparent to anyone who will read the preface with attention, is that whatever is overstrained, false, affected, bombastic, or nonsensical in prose is equally so in poetry. On this ground he condemned the prevalent personification of vague, abstract ideas.

They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style,

or as a family language which writers in meter seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him.

He likewise condemns so-called poetic diction, and says that he has taken as much pains to avoid it as others have to produce it. He continues:

I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject; consequently there is, I hope, in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets.

Elevation of style Wordsworth does not condemn, but he would have it proceed from the inner nature of the subject and not from some artificial trick of expression.

If the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions, the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which should shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendor of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary.

Such are the principal theories set forth in this famous preface, which has often been considered a sort of literary Declaration of Independence. They have been dwelt upon here at some length, not only because of their historical im-

portance as marking the return to greater naturalness and genuineness in literature, but also because of the insight they give into the nature and character of Wordsworth's poetry, with its rugged honesty, its firm rejection of every shallow artifice, and its earnest search after "emanations of reality and truth."

A WINTER OF WRITING IN GERMANY

The consideration of Wordsworth's preface has taken us some two years ahead of our story. For the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* Cottle paid Wordsworth £30, and bargained separately with Coleridge for his share in the collection.

Before the volume had appeared in print Wordsworth and Dorothy, in company with Coleridge, were on their way to Germany to spend the winter. At Hamburg they parted, the Wordsworths going to Goslar, in Hanover, and Coleridge to Ratzeburg, Göttingen, and other places, where he plunged deep into the study of German metaphysics. Wordsworth mingled little with the Germans, and returned to England the following summer little influenced by his journey. He did, however, write assiduously during his stay in Goslar, so that this winter was one of his most productive periods. The "Lucy" poems, "Ruth," "The Poet's Epitaph," "Nutting," "The Two April Mornings," "The Fountain," and "Matthew" are all the work of this winter abroad. As Wordsworth and his sister traveled homeward in the spring of 1799, he began "The Prelude," an autobiographical poem dealing with his early life.

GRASMERE AND MARRIAGE

The brother and sister spent the summer and autumn of this year visiting their relatives in the north of England. In late autumn, as Wordsworth and Coleridge were on a walk-

ing trip to view the scenery of the Lake District, they noticed in Grasmere a small vacant house which has since become one of the most famous literary shrines in England. At that time, however, it was just a modest, retired, two-story cottage, which had served as a public house, with the sign of the Dove and the Olive Bough,—whence the name “Dove Cottage,” by which it has come to be known. Wordsworth rented the house, and found the surroundings so much to his liking that he spent the remainder of his long life in Grasmere and the neighboring village of Rydal. He and his sister arrived at their new abode in December, 1799, and before the following summer was over they had made their cottage as attractive as the one Dorothy pictured in her letter quoted above.

In this humble dwelling the happiest and most fruitful years of Wordsworth’s life were passed. In 1802 the Earl of Lonsdale died, and the new master who inherited the estate promptly paid to the Wordsworth heirs the money due them, with interest, amounting altogether to £8500. Wordsworth was thus placed in easier circumstances; and in October of this year he married his cousin, Mary Hutchinson, to whom he had long been deeply attached. The marriage was a very happy one, and several fine poems attest the loyal devotion of the poet to the quiet, sweet-tempered woman who was in such perfect sympathy with his life of “plain living and high thinking.”

A creature not too bright or good
For human nature’s daily food

.

A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

Henceforth Wordsworth's life was one of unbroken serenity,—too unbroken, one would think; for more contact with the world might have prevented a certain stiffening and hardening of his poetical powers which came over him in his later years. But before this change began there were several wonderful years ahead of him.

The year of Wordsworth's marriage and the following year were among the most important of any in his poetical career. In the summer of 1802 he and Dorothy visited France; and the journey produced a number of sonnets of the highest quality,—sonnets equaled or surpassed in beauty and poetic force only by those of Shakespeare and Milton. In addition to the sonnets, this year produced a number of short poems, the best of which are the three addressed "To the Daisy," "Resolution and Independence," and "My Heart Leaps Up." In the summer of 1803 Wordsworth, Dorothy, and Coleridge visited Scotland together. One can almost trace their route by the titles of Wordsworth's poems, which include "At the Grave of Burns," "To a Highland Girl," "Glen Almain," "Stepping Westward," "The Solitary Reaper," "Sonnet on Douglas," and "Yarrow Unvisited." Each year now brought large additions to the number of his shorter poems. In 1805 "The Prelude" was finished, and in 1806 the famous "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," at which he had been at work off and on for three years. This poem is thought by some to be the loftiest production of Wordsworth's genius; indeed, Emerson declared it to be "the high-water mark which the intellect has reached in this age."

WORDSWORTH'S DECLINE IN POWER

After 1808 a change begins to be noticeable in the quality of Wordsworth's poetry. His inspiration came less spontaneously and was less radiant and buoyant. The poet was

passing from the full summer of his creative power into a rich golden autumn, not without a certain charm of its own for the thoughtful reader. Noble work he was still capable of producing on occasion, but often mixed with an alloy of inferior material. This is especially true of "The Excursion," a long autobiographical and philosophical poem, published in 1814. In the same year he wrote a poem full of chastened classical beauty on the story of Laodamia, which had been brought to his mind by reading Virgil with his eldest son. The next year appeared "The White Doe of Rylstone," a poem of some length and considerable beauty, which has never been appreciated as much as it deserves. The period of Wordsworth's life now being considered comes to a close in 1818, with a magnificent poem, "Composed upon an Evening of extraordinary Splendour and Beauty." This poem has not inaptly been designated the afterglow which marked the close of Wordsworth's glorious day of poetic creation.

From 1818 until his death Wordsworth continued to write, and at times had the happiness to catch something of his old inspiration, although, for the most part, the work of this period indicates a lessening of poetic sensibility and an indifference to new impressions. Passing from his Grasmere period to this, a reader who loves poetry for poetry's sake and not for the sake of its philosophical thought must sadly miss

The gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream.

During this period profound meditations on moral and religious questions are presented in dignified verse; but the liquid notes of the poet's earlier strain now seem unattainable to him.

Who shall say by what strange process Nature, in her hidden workings, her subtle weaving of complex causes into a web of inescapable effect, took from Wordsworth so early

the gift of song? Had his retired and uneventful mode of life brought on mental stagnation, had long-continued neglect chilled the ardor of his spirits, had approaching age already laid its leaden hand upon his delicate sensibilities, or had all three of these causes contributed to produce the change? Certain it is that no other poet of Wordsworth's ability ever had to overcome so much detraction and unmerited neglect. He was always open-minded toward intelligent criticism; but undiscerning censure only made him more tenacious of his opinions. To the scoffs of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review* he made no answer, but fortified himself in the belief which he thus expressed to a sympathetic friend: "My ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings." The exaggerated self-reliance thus forced upon Wordsworth could not but be detrimental to him, since it added to his natural stiffness of temper and thereby rendered him a poor judge of his own writings. However, to suppose that he had no perception of the difference between his good and his poor work, as some have affirmed, is a great mistake, as is shown by his having described "The Character of the Happy Warrior" to Miss Martineau as "a chain of extremely valuable thoughts" although it did not "meet poetical conditions." His later work was produced in the hope that his thoughts might be of some value to the world, even though they should add nothing to his fame as a poet. The best of his later gleanings are "The River Duddon Sonnets," a few of the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," and the poems written during various journeys, especially during the tours in Scotland in 1831 and 1833, and the tour in Italy in 1837. All of these may be safely dismissed by the general reader, with the exception of "Yarrow Visited," "Yarrow Revisited," "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg," and a few poems which derive an interest from some historical association.

The material returns which Wordsworth's long labors in the field of poetry brought him were, as Arnold has mentioned, very slight. In 1820 Wordsworth stated that the whole returns from the writing trade had not amounted to seven-score pounds. The literal facts are that Wordsworth received £30 for the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in 1798; £100 for the second edition, in 1800; and no more until 1835, when he received £1000 from Moxon for the copyright of his complete works. Nevertheless, Fortune was not so unkind to Wordsworth as to many other men of genius; for the favors that she withheld from him as a poet she bestowed upon him as a man. Through the good offices of the Earl of Lonsdale, Wordsworth was appointed distributor of stamps for Westmoreland in 1814, at a salary of £500 a year. A few years later part of Cumberland was added to his territory, and his income was thus brought up to about £1000 a year. The work was performed by a deputy; so that Wordsworth was furnished with an income sufficient for his needs, and yet could devote himself wholly to poetry.

AT RYDAL MOUNT

Just before his appointment to this office Wordsworth had removed his family to Rydal Mount, the home that is most often associated with his memory. This dwelling is about two miles distant from Grasmere, and stands on a slope overlooking Rydal Water; to the westward, it commands a view of the Rothay and the vale of Grasmere, closed in at the back by the towering peaks of Langdale. The family at this time consisted of two sons and one daughter. Two other children had died in childhood. Of the three who grew up, William, the eldest, became a minister; Dora became the chief companion of her father; and Thomas, the youngest, succeeded the poet as distributor of stamps in 1842.

WORDSWORTH'S GENIUS RECOGNIZED

In 1839 the University of Oxford honored Wordsworth by conferring upon him the degree of D.C.L., and his reception upon the occasion is said to have been the most enthusiastic ever given anyone except the Duke of Wellington. From 1830 onward his genius was universally acknowledged, and he received such veneration as few men have ever received. In 1842 he was given an annuity of £300 from the Civil List, for distinguished literary merit. The following year Southey died, and the place of poet laureate was offered to Wordsworth. He refused at first, on the ground of being too old to write anything worthy of the office, but finally accepted upon being assured by Sir Robert Peel, then prime minister, that "the offer was made, not for the purpose of imposing on him any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay him that tribute of respect which was justly due to the first of living poets." The only poem which resulted from his laureateship was the "Ode on the Installation of His Royal Highness Prince Albert as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge."

During Wordsworth's later years his home became a sort of shrine to which pilgrims came from all quarters, even from distant America. All were received with unaffected courtesy by the aged poet, who still kept up his simple mode of life. The reverence shown him was pleasing to him, although his serious thoughts were centered on other things. About this time he wrote to a friend:

It is indeed a deep satisfaction to hope and believe that my poetry will be, while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth, especially among the young. As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of Infinity and Eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore.

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

In 1847 Wordsworth's only daughter died, and his grief was so great that he never recovered from it. Dora had been the favorite of his declining years, and in her fervid temperament and quick intelligence there was much to remind him of the golden time of his sister's youth. The aged man's thoughts were now more and more on the unseen world whither his daughter had preceded him. In the spring of 1850 he received a chill which resulted in pleurisy. For some weeks he lingered on in a state of passive weakness, gradually growing worse. At last Mrs. Wordsworth announced to him his approaching death by saying, "William, you are going to Dora." There was no response at the time, and it was not certain whether he had heard the words, but more than twenty-four hours afterward he said to a niece who entered the room, "Is that Dora?" On April 23, the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth and death, his spirit passed away.

A marble figure of Wordsworth is seated in Westminster Abbey, but his body, in accordance with his request, lies with the bodies of those dearest to him, in the quiet Grasmere churchyard. About him lie the dalesmen and rural folk whom he loved, while from the distance look down the bare and silent mountains on whose slopes his eyes had so often rested in pensive meditation. Skirting the churchyard on one side flows the slender stream which is addressed in the following lines:

Time may restore us in his course
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;
 But where will Europe's latter hour
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?

.

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha ! with thy living wave ;
Sing him thy best, for few or none
Hear thy voice right, now he is gone.

In this beautiful tribute Matthew Arnold shows not less critical insight than poetic feeling. "Healing power" is the quality which is most characteristic of Wordsworth. This power is the result not of direct moral teaching but of a certain quiet dignity and moral elevation which takes its origin from the poet's perception of the great central truths of nature and of human life. For a complex age filled with trivial distractions he voices "the depth and not the tumult of the soul." Amid the cheat of "getting and spending" and all the busy clatter which threatens to engross our lives, he gives us higher ideals, and reminds us, with the voice of a seer, that

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence.

Leslie Stephen says :

Other poetry becomes trifling when we are making our inevitable passage through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Wordsworth's alone retains its power. We love him the more as we grow older and become more deeply impressed with the sadness and seriousness of life : we are apt to grow weary of his rivals when we have fairly quitted the regions of youthful enchantment. And I take the explanation to be, that he is not merely a melodious writer, or a powerful utterer of deep emotion, but a true philosopher. His poetry wears well because it has solid substance. He is a prophet and a moralist as well as a sweet singer.

SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years :
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees 5
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail ; 10
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade :
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise, 15
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes !

1797

WE ARE SEVEN

A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death ? 20

I met a little cottage Girl :
She was eight years old, she said ;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

5 She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad :
Her eyes were fair, and very fair :
—Her beauty made me glad.

10 “Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be ?”
“How many ? Seven in all,” she said
And wondering looked at me.

15 “And where are they ? I pray you tell.”
She answered, “Seven are we ;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

20 “Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother ;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

 “You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven !—I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

25 Then did the little Maid reply,
“Seven boys and girls are we ;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

"You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen," 5
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them. 10

"And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there. 15

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away. 20

"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow, 25
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
 "If they two are in heaven?"
 Quick was the little Maid's reply,
 "O Master! we are seven."

5

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
 Their spirits are in heaven!"
 'Twas throwing words away; for still
 The little Maid would have her will,
 And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

1798

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

10

I heard a thousand blended notes,
 While in a grove I sate reclined,
 In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
 Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

15

To her fair works did Nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it grieved my heart to think
 What man has made of man.

20

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
 The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
 And 'tis my faith that every flower
 Enjoys the air it breathes.

25

The birds around me hopped and played,
 Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
 But the least motion which they made
 It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
 To catch the breezy air;

And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

5

1798

TO MY SISTER

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

10

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

15

Edward will come with you;—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

20

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.

25

Love, now a universal birth,
 From heart to heart is stealing,
 From earth to man, from man to earth :
 —It is the hour of feeling.

5 One moment now may give us more
 Than years of toiling reason :
 Our minds shall drink at every pore
 The spirit of the season.

10 Some silent laws our hearts will make,
 Which they shall long obey :
 We for the year to come may take
 Our temper from to-day.

15 And from the blessed power that rolls
 About, below, above,
 We'll frame the measure of our souls :
 They shall be tuned to love.

20 Then come, my sister ! come, I pray,
 With speed put on your woodland dress ;
 And bring no book : for this one day
 We'll give to idleness.

1798

LINES

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY,
 ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A
 TOUR. JULY 13, 1798

Five years have past ; five summers, with the length
 Of five long winters ! and again I hear
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
 With a soft inland murmur.—Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
 That on a wild secluded scene impress
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
 The day is come when I again repose 5
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see 10
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
 Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem 15
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
 Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
 The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
 Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye: 20
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind, 25
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
 As have no slight or trivial influence
 On that best portion of a good man's life,
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts 30
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
 To them I may have owed another gift,
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,

In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
5 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
10 While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
15 Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
20 How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
25 While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
30 I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man

Flying from something that he dreads, than one
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint 5
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love, 10
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this 15
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompence. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes 20
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime 25
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
 A motion and a spirit, that impels 30
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
5 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
10 For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
15 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
20 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
25 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
30 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,

When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
 Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then, 5
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
 And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
 If I should be where I no more can hear 10
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
 Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
 That on the banks of this delightful stream
 We stood together; and that I, so long
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came 15
 Unwearied in that service: rather say
 With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
 That after many wanderings, many years
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs, 20
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

1798

THE LUCY POEMS

I

Strange fits of passion have I known:
 And I will dare to tell,
 But in the Lover's ear alone, 25
 What once to me befell.
 When she I loved looked every day
 Fresh as a rose in June,
 I to her cottage bent my way,
 Beneath an evening-moon. 30

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea ;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

5 And now we reached the orchard-plot ;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

10 In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon !
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

15 My horse moved on ; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped :
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

20 What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head !
"O mercy !" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead !"

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love :

25 A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye !
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be ;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me !

1799

III

I travelled among unknown men, 5
In lands beyond the sea ;
Nor, England ! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream !
Nor will I quit thy shore 10
A second time ; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire ;
And she I cherished turned her wheel 15
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played ;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed. 20

1799

IV

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown ;
This Child I to myself will take ;
She shall be mine, and I will make 25
A Lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
5 Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn,
Or up the mountain springs;
10 And her's shall be the breathing balm,
And her's the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
15 Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
20 To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight
25 Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
30 Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!
 She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

5

1799

V

A slumber did my spirit seal;
 I had no human fears:
 She seemed a thing that could not feel
 The touch of earthly years.

10

No motion has she now, no force;
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

1799

THE FOUNTAIN

A CONVERSATION

We talked with open heart, and tongue
 Affectionate and true,
 A pair of friends, though I was young,
 And Matthew seventy-two.

15

We lay beneath a spreading oak,
 Beside a mossy seat;
 And from the turf a fountain broke,
 And gurgled at our feet.

20

"Now, Matthew!" said I, "let us match
 This water's pleasant tune

With some old border-song, or catch
That suits a summer's noon ;

5 "Or of the church-clock and the chimes
Sing here beneath the shade,
That half-mad thing of witty rhymes
Which you last April made ! "

10 In silence Matthew lay, and eyed
The spring beneath the tree ;
And thus the dear old Man replied,
The grey-haired man of glee :

"No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears ;
How merrily it goes !
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

15 "And here, on this delightful day,
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this fountain's brink.

20 "My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

25 "Thus fares it still in our decay :
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

"The blackbird amid leafy trees,
The lark above the hill,

Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

"With Nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free:

5

"But we are pressed by heavy laws;
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

10

"If there be one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own;
It is the man of mirth.

"My days, my Friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved."

15

"Now both himself and me he wrongs,
The man who thus complains;
I live and sing my idle songs
Upon these happy plains;

20

"And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I'll be a son to thee!"
At this he grasped my hand, and said,
"Alas! that cannot be."

25

We rose up from the fountain-side;
And down the smooth descent

Of the green sheep-track did we glide;
And through the wood we went;

And, ere we came to Leonard's rock,
He sang those witty rhymes
About the crazy old church-clock,
And the bewildered chimes.

1799

LUCY GRAY

OR, SOLITUDE

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, Child, to light
Your mother through the snow."

"That, Father! will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!"

At this the Father raised his hook,
And snapped a faggot-band ;
He plied his work ;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe : 5
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time :
She wandered up and down ; 10
And many a hill did Lucy climb :
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide ;
But there was neither sound nor sight 15
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor ;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door. 20

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,
“In heaven we all shall meet ;”
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy’s feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill’s edge 25
They tracked the footmarks small ;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall ;

And then an open field they crossed :
 The marks were still the same ;
 They tracked them on, nor ever lost ;
 And to the bridge they came.

5

They followed from the snowy bank
 Those footmarks, one by one,
 Into the middle of the plank ;
 And further there were none !

10

—Yet some maintain that to this day
 She is a living child ;
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
 Upon the lonesome wild.

15

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
 And never looks behind ;
 And sings a solitary song
 That whistles in the wind.

1799

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

20

If from the public way you turn your steps
 Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
 You will suppose that with an upright path
 Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent
 The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
 But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,
 And made a hidden valley of their own.

25

No habitation can be seen ; but they
 Who journey thither find themselves alone
 With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites

That overhead are sailing in the sky.
 It is in truth an utter solitude;
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
 But for one object which you might pass by,
 Might see and notice not. Beside the brook 5
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
 And to that simple object appertains
 A story—unenriched with strange events,
 Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first 10
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me
 Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
 Whom I already loved; not verily
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
 Where was their occupation and abode. 15
 And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel
 For passions that were not my own, and think 20
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.
 Therefore, although it be a history
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same
 For the delight of a few natural hearts; 25
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
 Will be my second self when I am gone.
 Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name; 30
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,

And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
5 When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
10 "The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
15 That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
20 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
25 Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honourable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
30 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—

Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest 5
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase, 10
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale 15
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there, 20
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves 25
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field. 30

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light

Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.

Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.

And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night

The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.

This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground

Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;

And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all

Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named *The Evening Star*.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart

This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,

Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes 5
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked 10
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he 15
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun, 20
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The *Clipping Tree*,¹ a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks 25
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up 30
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut

¹ "Clipping" is the word used in the North of England for shearing.

With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy ; wherewith equipt
5 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help ;
10 And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise ;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
15 Against the mountain blasts ; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
20 Were dearer now ? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind ;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again ?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up :
25 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
30 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means ;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him ; and old Michael now

Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed 5
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields. 10
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love 15
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I; 20
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this 25
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land 30
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend

In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
5 He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"

At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
10 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
15 And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
20 And left estates and monies to the poor.
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
25 And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
30 Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth

To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night :

—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night.”

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long 5
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work : for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 10
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep :
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, “Thou must not go : 15
We have no other Child but thee to lose—
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die.”
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice ;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 20
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work ;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared 25
As cheerful as a grove in Spring : at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy ;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith 30
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over ; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round ;

Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
5 The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

10 Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
15 Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
20 I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
25 When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
30 Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;

While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees. 5
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words 10
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein 15
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived, 20
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould.
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son, 25
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work, 30
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good

That thou should'st go."

At this the old Man paused ;

Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,

Thus, after a short silence, he resumed :

"This was a work for us ; and now, my Son,

5 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—

Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.

Nay, Boy, be of good hope ;—we both may live

To see a better day. At eighty-four

I still am strong and hale ;—do thou thy part ;

10 I will do mine.—I will begin again

With many tasks that were resigned to thee :

Up to the heights, and in among the storms,

Will I without thee go again, and do

All works which I was wont to do alone,

15 Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy !

Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast

With many hopes ; it should be so—yes—yes—

I knew that thou could'st never have a wish

To leave me, Luke : thou hast been bound to me

20 Only by links of love : when thou art gone,

What will be left to us !—But, I forget

My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,

As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,

When thou art gone away, should evil men

25 Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,

And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,

And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear

And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou

May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,

30 Who, being innocent, did for that cause

Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—

When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see

A work which is not here : a covenant

'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid 5
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.

—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace, 10
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers, 15
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout 20
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."

Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now 25
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself 30
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;

'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: ¹¹
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
5 Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
10 Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
15 The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
20 Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
25 Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named *The Evening Star*
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
30 On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll. 1800

THE SPARROW'S NEST

Behold, within the leafy shade,
 Those bright blue eggs together laid!
 On me the chance-discovered sight
 Gleamed like a vision of delight.
 I started—seeming to espy
 The home and sheltered bed,
 The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
 My Father's house, in wet or dry
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together visited.

5

10

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
 Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:
 Such heart was in her, being then
 A little Prattler among men.
 The Blessing of my later years
 Was with me when a boy:
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
 And humble cares, and delicate fears;
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
 And love, and thought, and joy.

15

1801 20

"MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD"

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky:
 So was it when my life began;
 So is it now I am a man;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!

25

The Child is father of the Man;
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.

1802

WRITTEN IN MARCH

WHILE RESTING ON THE BRIDGE AT THE FOOT
OF BROTHER'S WATER

The Cock is crowing,
 The stream is flowing,
 The small birds twitter,
 The lake doth glitter,
 5 The green field sleeps in the sun;
 The oldest and youngest
 Are at work with the strongest;
 The cattle are grazing,
 Their heads never raising;
 10 There are forty feeding like one!

Like an army defeated
 The snow hath retreated,
 And now doth fare ill
 On the top of the bare hill;
 15 The ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon:
 There's joy in the mountains;
 There's life in the fountains;
 Small clouds are sailing,
 Blue sky prevailing;
 20 The rain is over and gone!

1802

"I GRIEVED FOR BUONAPARTÉ"

I grieved for Buonaparté, with a vain
 And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
 Of that Man's mind—what can it be? what food
 Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?
 25 'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
 The Governor who must be wise and good,

And temper with the sternness of the brain
 Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
 Wisdom doth live with children round her knees :
 Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
 Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk 5
 Of the mind's business : these are the degrees
 By which true Sway doth mount ; this is the stalk
 True Power doth grow on ; and her rights are these.
 1802

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE
 SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair :
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by 10
 A sight so touching in its majesty :
 This City now doth, like a garment, wear
 The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky ; 15
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
 Never did sun more beautifully steep
 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
 The river glideth at his own sweet will : 20
 Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still !

“IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE”

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun
 Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun 25
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
 The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea ;

Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
5 If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

1802

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN
REPUBLIC

10 Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
15 No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
20 Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

1802

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802

25 O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, oppress'd,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,

Or groom! — We must run glittering like a brook
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
 The wealthiest man among us is the best:
 No grandeur now in nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry; and these we adore:
 Plain living and high thinking are no more:
 The homely beauty of the good old cause
 Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

5

10

LONDON, 1802

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
 Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

15

20

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY"

When I have borne in memory what has tamed
 Great Nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
 When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
 The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
 I had, my Country! — am I to be blamed?

25

Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
5 In thee a bulwark for the cause of men:
And I by my affection was beguiled:
What wonder if a Poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child!

1802

TO THE DAISY

10 With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Daisy! again I talk to thee,
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming Common-place
15 Of Nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace,
Which Love makes for thee!
Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play with similes,
20 Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising:
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game,
25 While I am gazing.
A nun demure of lowly port;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations;
30 A queen in crown of rubies drest;
A starveling in a scanty vest;

Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly 5
The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some faery bold
In fight to cover! 10

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee!
Yet like a star, with glittering crest, 15
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest;—
May peace come never to his nest,
Who shall reprove thee!

Bright *Flower*! for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past, 20
I call thee and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share 25
Of thy meek nature! 1802

THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather, 30

In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-seat !
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

5 One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest :
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion !
10 Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May ;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
15 Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment :
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair ;
20 Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover ;
25 There ! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
30 A Brother of the dancing leaves ;

Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
 Pours forth his song in gushes ;
 As if by that exulting strain
 He mocked and treated with disdain
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
 While fluttering in the bushes.

5

1803

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL

AT INVERSNEYDE, UPON LOCH LOMOND

Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower
 Of beauty is thy earthly dower !
 Twice seven consenting years have shed
 Their utmost bounty on thy head :
 And these grey rocks ; that household lawn ;
 Those trees, a veil just half withdrawn ;
 This fall of water that doth make
 A murmur near the silent lake ;
 This little bay ; a quiet road
 That holds in shelter thy Abode—
 In truth together do ye seem
 Like something fashioned in a dream ;
 Such Forms as from their covert peep
 When earthly cares are laid asleep !
 But, O fair Creature ! in the light
 Of common day, so heavenly bright,
 I bless Thee, Vision as thou art,
 I bless thee with a human heart ;
 God shield thee to thy latest years !
 Thee, neither know I, nor thy peers ;
 And yet my eyes are filled with tears.
 With earnest feeling I shall pray
 For thee when I am far away :
 For never saw I mien, or face,

10

15

20

25

30

In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here scattered, like a random seed,
5 Remote from men, Thou dost not need
The embarrassed look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness :
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a Mountaineer :
10 A face with gladness overspread !
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred !
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays ;
With no restraint, but such as springs
15 From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech :
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life !
20 So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind—
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful ?
25 O happy pleasure ! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell ;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,
A Shepherd, thou a Shepherdess !
But I could frame a wish for thee
30 More like a grave reality :
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea ; and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.

What joy to hear thee, and to see!

Thy elder Brother I would be,

Thy Father—anything to thee!

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace

Hath led me to this lonely place.

5

Joy have I had; and going hence

I bear away my recompence.

In spots like these it is we prize

Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes:

Then, why should I be loth to stir?

10

I feel this place was made for her;

To give new pleasure like the past,

Continued long as life shall last.

Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,

Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part:

15

For I, methinks, till I grow old,

As fair before me shall behold,

As I do now, the cabin small,

The lake, the bay, the waterfall;

And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

20

1803

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,

Yon solitary Highland Lass!

Reaping and singing by herself;

Stop here, or gently pass!

Alone she cuts and binds the grain,

25

And sings a melancholy strain;

O listen! for the Vale profound

Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt

More welcome notes to weary bands

30

Of travellers in some shady haunt,

Among Arabian sands :
 A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
 Breaking the silence of the seas
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

5

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,
 And battles long ago :
 Or is it some more humble lay,
 Familiar matter of to-day ?
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
 That has been, and may be again ?

10

15

20

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
 As if her song could have no ending ;
 I saw her singing at her work,
 And o'er the sickle bending ;—
 I listened, motionless and still ;
 And, as I mounted up the hill
 The music in my heart I bore,
 Long after it was heard no more.

1803

SONNET

COMPOSED AT [NEIDPATH] CASTLE

Degenerate Douglas ! oh, the unworthy Lord !
 Whom mere despite of heart could so far please,
 And love of havoc, (for with such disease
 Fame taxes him,) that he could send forth word
 To level with the dust a noble horde,
 A brotherhood of venerable Trees,
 Leaving an ancient dome, and towers like these,

25

Beggared and outraged! — Many hearts deplored
 The fate of those old Trees; and oft with pain
 The traveller, at this day, will stop and gaze
 On wrongs, which Nature scarcely seems to heed:
 For sheltered places, bosoms, nooks, and bays,
 And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed,
 And the green silent pastures, yet remain.

5

1803

YARROW UNVISITED

From Stirling castle we had seen
 The mazy Forth unravelled;
 Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
 And with the Tweed had travelled;
 And when we came to Clovenford,
 Then said my "*winsome Marrow*,"
 "Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
 And see the Braes of Yarrow."

10

15

"Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
 Who have been buying, selling,
 Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own;
 Each maiden to her dwelling!
 On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
 Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
 But we will downward with the Tweed,
 Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

20

"There's Galla Water, Leader Haughs,
 Both lying right before us;
 And Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
 The lintwhites sing in chorus;
 There's pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land
 Made blithe with plough and harrow:
 Why throw away a needful day
 To go in search of Yarrow?

25

30

"What's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."

5 —Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn
My True-love sighed for sorrow;
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

10 "Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,
We'll wander Scotland thorough;
15 But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake
20 Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
To-day, nor yet to-morrow,
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

25 "Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
30 We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
'Twill be another Yarrow!

"If Care with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loth to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy ;
Should life be dull, and spirits low, 5
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow! "

1803

TO THE CUCKOO

O Blithe New-comer ! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice. 10
O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice ?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass, 15
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours. 20

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery ;

The same whom in my school-boy days 25
I listened to ; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
 Through woods and on the green;
 And thou wert still a hope, a love;
 Still longed for, never seen.

5 And I can listen to thee yet;
 Can lie upon the plain
 And listen, till I do beget
 That golden time again.

10 O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
 Again appears to be
 An unsubstantial, faery place;
 That is fit home for Thee! 1804

“SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT”

15 She was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
 Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her drawn
 20 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

25 I saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin-liberty;
 A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet;

A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine ;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death ;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light. 1804

"I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD"

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. 20

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. 25

The waves beside them danced ; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company : 30

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought :

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
5 They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1804

THE SMALL CELANDINE

10 There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain ;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again !

15 When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green field and the trees distress,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest.

20 But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
And recognised it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
"It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold :
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.

25 "The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew ;
It cannot help itself in its decay ;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
 A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
 O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
 Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

1804

ODE TO DUTY

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eò perductus, ut non tantum rectè
 facere possim, sed nisi rectè facere non possim."

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God! 5
 O Duty! if that name thou love
 Who art a light to guide, a rod
 To check the erring, and reprove;
 Thou, who art victory and law
 When empty terrors overawe; 10
 From vain temptations dost set free;
 And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
 Be on them; who, in love and truth,
 Where no misgiving is, rely 15
 Upon the genial sense of youth:
 Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot
 Who do thy work, and know it not:
 Oh! if through confidence misplaced
 They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast. 20

Serene will be our days and bright,
 And happy will our nature be,
 When love is an unerring light,
 And joy its own security.
 And they a blissful course may hold 25
 Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
 Live in the spirit of this creed;
 Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust:
5 And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
10 Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought:
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires:
15 My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
20 As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and
strong.

25 To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
30 The spirit of self-sacrifice;

The confidence of reason give ;
 And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live !

1805

ELEGIAC STANZAS

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A
 STORM, PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile !
 Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :
 I saw thee every day ; and all the while
 Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea. 5

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air !
 So like, so very like, was day to day !
 Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there ;
 It trembled, but it never passed away. 10

How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep ;
 No mood, which season takes away, or brings :
 I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
 Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah ! *then*, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
 To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,
 The light that never was, on sea or land,
 The consecration, and the Poet's dream ; 15

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
 Amid a world how different from this !
 Beside a sea that could not cease to smile ;
 On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
 Of peaceful years ; a chronicle of heaven ; —
 Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
 The very sweetest had to thee been given. 25

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

- 5 Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made:
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed.

- So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
10 I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

- Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
15 The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

- Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the Friend,
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
20 This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

- 25 And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer, 5
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

1805

A COMPLAINT

There is a change—and I am poor;
Your love hath been, not long ago, 10
A fountain at my fond heart's door,
Whose only business was to flow;
And flow it did: not taking heed
Of its own bounty, or my need.

What happy moments did I count! 15
Blest was I then all bliss above!
Now, for that consecrated fount
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,
What have I? shall I dare to tell?
A comfortless and hidden well. 20

A well of love—it may be deep—
I trust it is,—and never dry:
What matter? if the waters sleep
In silence and obscurity.
—Such change, and at the very door 25
Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.

1806

ADMONITION

Well may'st thou halt—and gaze with brightening eye!
 The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook
 Hath stirred thee deeply; with its own dear brook,
 Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!
 5 But covet not the Abode;—forbear to sigh,
 As many do, repining while they look;
 Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book
 This precious leaf, with harsh impiety.
 Think what the home must be if it were thine,
 10 Even thine, though few thy wants!—Roof, window, door,
 The very flowers are sacred to the Poor,
 The roses to the porch which they entwine:
 Yea, all, that now enchants thee, from the day
 On which it should be touched, would melt away.

1806

"THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US"

15 The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 20 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 25 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

1806

TO SLEEP

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
 One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
 Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
 Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
 I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie 5
 Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies
 Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
 And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
 Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
 And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth: 10
 So do not let me wear to-night away:
 Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
 Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
 Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

1806

TO THE MEMORY OF RAISLEY CALVERT

Calvert! it must not be unheard by them 15
 Who may respect my name, that I to thee
 Owed many years of early liberty.
 This care was thine when sickness did condemn
 Thy youth to hopeless wasting, root and stem—
 That I, if frugal and severe, might stray 20
 Where'er I liked; and finally array
 My temples with the Muse's diadem.
 Hence, if in freedom I have loved the truth;
 If there be aught of pure, or good, or great,
 In my past verse; or shall be, in the lays 25
 Of higher mood, which now I meditate;—
 It gladdens me, O worthy, short-lived, Youth!
 To think how much of this will be thy praise.

1806

ODE

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS
OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,

5 The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore ;—

Turn wheresoe'er I may,

By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

10 The Rainbow comes and goes,

And lovely is the Rose,

The Moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare,

Waters on a starry night

15 Are beautiful and fair ;

The sunshine is a glorious birth ;

But yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,

20 And while the young lambs bound

As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief :

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,

And I again am strong :

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;

5

Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,

And with the heart of May

Doth every Beast keep holiday;—

Thou Child of Joy,

10

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
 Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessèd Creatures, I have heard the call

Ye to each other make; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

15

My heart is at your festival,

My head hath its coronal,

The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.

Oh evil day! if I were sullen

While Earth herself is adorning,

20

This sweet May-morning,

And the Children are culling

On every side,

In a thousand valleys far and wide,

Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,

25

And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—

I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!

—But there's a Tree, of many, one,

A single Field which I have looked upon,

Both of them speak of something that is gone:

30

The Pansy at my feet

Doth the same tale repeat:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
5 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
10 From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
15 He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
20 At length the Man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
25 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his father's eyes! 5
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A morning or a funeral; 10
 And this hath now his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long 15
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
 The little Actor cons another part;
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age, 20
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy Soul's immensity; 25
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest! 30
 On whom those truths do rest,

Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
 5 A Presence which is not to be put by;
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
 10 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
 15 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive!
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benediction: not indeed
 20 For that which is most worthy to be blest—
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed
 Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
 Not for these I raise
 25 The song of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a Creature
 30 Moving about in worlds not realised,
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:

But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing; 5
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
 To perish never;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour, 10
 Nor Man nor Boy,
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!
 Hence in a season of calm weather
 Though inland far we be, 15
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. 20

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
 And let the young Lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound!
 We in thought will join your throng,
 Ye that pipe and ye that play, 25
 Ye that through your hearts to-day
 Feel the gladness of the May!
 What though the radiance which was once so bright
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour 30
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
 We will grieve not, rather find

Strength in what remains behind ;
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be ;
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 5 Out of human suffering ;
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
 Forebode not any severing of our loves !
 10 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
 I only have relinquished one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;
 15 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
 Is lovely yet ;
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
 20 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

1803-1806

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION
 OF SWITZERLAND

25 Two Voices are there ; one is of the sea,
 One of the mountains ; each a mighty Voice :
 In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
 They were thy chosen music, Liberty !

There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
 Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:
 Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
 Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
 Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft: 5
 Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
 For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
 That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
 And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
 And neither awful Voice be heard by thee! 10
 1807

"O NIGHTINGALE! THOU SURELY ART"

O Nightingale! thou surely art
 A creature of a "fiery heart":—
 These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
 Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
 Thou sing'st as if the God of wine 15
 Had helped thee to a Valentine;
 A song in mockery and despite
 Of shades, and dews, and silent night;
 And steady bliss, and all the loves
 Now sleeping in these peaceful groves. 20
 I heard a Stock-dove sing or say
 His homely tale, this very day;
 His voice was buried among trees,
 Yet to be come at by the breeze:
 He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed; 25
 And somewhat pensively he wooed:
 He sang of love, with quiet blending,
 Slow to begin, and never ending;
 Of serious faith, and inward glee;
 That was the song—the song for me! 30
 1807

LAODAMIA

"With sacrifice before the rising morn
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired ;
And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades forlorn
Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required :
5 Celestial pity I again implore ;—
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !"

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her hands ;
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
10 Her countenance brightens—and her eye expands ;
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows ;
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror ! what hath she perceived ?—O joy !
What doth she look on ?—whom doth she behold ?
15 Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy ?
His vital presence ? his corporeal mould ?
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He !
And a God leads him, wingèd Mercury !

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand
20 That calms all fear ; "Such grace hath crowned thy prayer,
Laodamia ! that at Jove's command
Thy Husband walks the paths of upper air :
He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space ;
Accept the gift, behold him face to face !"

25 Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to clasp ;
Again that consummation she essayed ;
But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
As often as that eager grasp was made.

The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,
And re-assume his place before her sight.

“Protesiláus, lo! thy guide is gone!
Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice:
This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne; 5
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice.
Not to appal me have the gods bestowed
This precious boon; and blest a sad abode.”

“Great Jove, Laodamía! doth not leave
His gifts imperfect:—Spectre though I be, 10
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;
But in reward of thy fidelity.
And something also did my worth obtain;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

“Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold 15
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
Should die; but me the threat could not withhold:
A generous cause a victim did demand;
And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain.” 20

“Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best!
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore;
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art— 25
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

“But thou, though capable of sternest deed,
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed

Thou should'st elude the malice of the grave:
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

5 "No Spectre greets me, no vain Shadow this;
Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side!
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day, a second time thy bride!"
Jove frowned in heaven: the conscious *Parcæ* threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

10 "This visage tells thee that my doom is past:
Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
Those raptures duly—*Erebus* disdains:
15 Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

"Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control
Rebellious passion: for the Gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
20 Thy transports moderate; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn—"

"Ah, wherefore?—Did not *Hercules* by force
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
25 Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And *Æson* stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

"The Gods to us are merciful—and they
Yet further may relent: for mightier far
30 Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway

Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast.

"But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said,—
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered; 5
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel 10
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued; 15

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day 20
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue.—"Ill," said he,
"The end of man's existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry 25
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night;

"And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise 30

By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

5 “The wished-for wind was given:—I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

10 “Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers,
15 My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers.

“But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,
‘Behold, they tremble!—haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?’
In soul I swept the indignity away:
20 Old frailties then recurred:—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

“And Thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow;
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
25 Our blest re-union in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathised;
Be thy affections raised and solemnised.

“Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
30 Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
For this the passion to excess was driven—

That self might be annulled : her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.”—

Aloud she shrieked ! for Hermes reappears !
Round the dear Shade she would have clung—’tis vain :
The hours are past—too brief had they been years ; 5
And him no mortal effort can detain :
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
He through the portal takes his silent way,
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse She lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved, 10
She perished ; and, as for a wilful crime,
By the just Gods whom no weak pity moved,
Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
Apart from happy Ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet ’mid unfading bowers. 15

—Yet tears to human suffering are due ;
And mortal hopes defeated and o’erthrown
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained) 20
A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died ;
And ever, when such stature they had gained
That Ilium’s walls were subject to their view,
The trees’ tall summits withered at the sight ; 25
A constant interchange of growth and blight ! 1814

“SURPRISED BY JOY—IMPATIENT AS THE WIND”

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh ! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find ? 30

Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
 But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
 Even for the least division of an hour,
 Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
 5 To my most grievous loss?—That thought's return
 Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
 Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
 Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
 That neither present time, nor years unborn
 10 Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

1815

TO A SKY-LARK

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
 15 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
 20 Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

1825

“‘THERE!’ SAID A STRIPLING, POINTING WITH
 MEET PRIDE”

“There!” said a Stripling, pointing with meet pride
 Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed,
 25 “Is Mosgiel Farm; and that’s the very field
 Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy.” Far and wide

A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
 Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose ;
 And, by that simple notice, the repose
 Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.
 Beneath "the random *biold* of clod or stone" 5
 Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
 Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
 Have passed away ; less happy than the One
 That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
 The tender charm of poetry and love. 1833 10

"WHY ART THOU SILENT! IS THY LOVE A PLANT"

Why art thou silent ! Is thy love a plant
 Of such weak fibre that the treacherous air
 Of absence withers what was once so fair ?
 Is there no debt to pay, no boon to grant ?
 Yet have my thoughts for thee been vigilant— 15
 Bound to thy service with unceasing care,
 The mind's least generous wish a mendicant
 For nought but what thy happiness could spare.
 Speak—though this soft warm heart, once free to hold
 A thousand tender pleasures, thine and mine, 20
 Be left more desolate, more dreary cold
 Than a forsaken bird's-nest filled with snow
 'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine—
 Speak, that my torturing doubts their end may know !
 1835

EXTEMPORE EFFUSION UPON THE DEATH OF
JAMES HOGG

When first, descending from the moorlands, 25
 I saw the Stream of Yarrow glide
 Along a bare and open valley,
 The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide.

When last along its banks I wandered,
Through groves that had begun to shed
Their golden leaves upon the pathways,
My steps the Border-minstrel led.

5 The mighty Minstrel breathes no longer,
 'Mid mouldering ruins low he lies ;
 And death upon the braes of Yarrow,
 Has closed the Shepherd-poet's eyes :

10 Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
 From sign to sign, its stedfast course,
 Since every mortal power of Coleridge
 Was frozen at its marvellous source ;

15 The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,
 The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth :
 And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
 Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

20 Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,
 Or waves that own no curbing hand,
 How fast has brother followed brother
 From sunshine to the sunless land !

 Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber
 Were earlier raised, remain to hear
 A timid voice, that asks in whispers,
 "Who next will drop and disappear?"

25 Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,
 Like London with its own black wreath,
 On which with thee, O Crabbe! forth-looking,
 I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath.

As if but yesterday departed,
Thou too art gone before ; but why,
O'er ripe fruit, seasonably gathered,
Should frail survivors heave a sigh ?

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep ;
For Her who, ere her summer faded,
Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

No more of old romantic sorrows,
For slaughtered Youth or love-lorn Maid !
With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,
And Ettrick mourns with her their Poet dead.

1835

ARNOLD'S ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH



MATTHEW ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD

CRITIC AND POET

The taunt, so often heard, that aspiring authors who fail at everything else turn critic, has just enough truth in it to give it the sting required of controversial satire. That creative power is more to be honored than the critical faculty is the implication which gives point to Augustine Birrell's witty retort to Matthew Arnold's censures on the earlier translations of Homer. "If Pope," he said, "had lived in our day, instead of translating Homer, he would have written essays on how not to do it." No doubt few of the ordinary critics in any age could meet the challenge of Pope's well-known couplet:

Let such teach others, who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.

And yet it is interesting to note that the greatest critics,—critics who have originated new ideas, or who have given currency to old ideas by the novelty or vigor with which they have expressed them,—have almost invariably been those who have written well in other departments of literature.

In the hands of a man like Matthew Arnold, criticism becomes something more than the production of books about books: it becomes a vital force, touching life in manifold ways with reinvigorating power. Few writers have brought to the work of criticism finer natural gifts coupled with more adequate intellectual training. Herbert W. Paul, in summing up his estimate of Arnold, says:

Mr. Arnold, as we have seen, had his critical limitations. He excluded too much. But judging his critical work, as talent should be judged, at its best, one can hardly overpraise it. It is original, penetrating, lucid, sympathetic, and just. Of all modern poets, except Goethe, he was the best critic. Of all modern critics, with the same exception, he was the best poet.

EARLY LIFE

In the circumstances of his early life Matthew Arnold was unusually fortunate. He was born at Laleham, England, December 24, 1822, being the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, who is known and loved by all readers of Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days*. In addition to being the noble character who could exert the influence there ascribed to him, Dr. Arnold was a thorough classical scholar, a polished and forceful writer on his favorite subject of history, and a man of broad vision who might have risen to greater prominence had he not been cut off prematurely, in early middle life, by heart disease. The personality of Matthew Arnold's mother is shown by the fact that, down to the time of her death, in 1873, a strong bond of intellectual and moral sympathy existed between her and her gifted son.

As was to have been expected, the Arnold children from earliest years were given the most careful training. "Suckled on Latin and weaned on Greek," someone who knew the family asserted of their classical studies; and it is certain that early familiarity with the best Greek models was one of the principal influences which shaped Matthew Arnold's life.

With the exception of one year spent at Winchester, his father's old school, Arnold's preparatory education was obtained at Rugby. In 1840 he won a school prize by his

poem "Alaric at Rome," the only one of his poems which his father lived to see. In the same year Arnold had the good fortune to be elected to an open scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford, where he went into residence in 1841. As a student he was noted for his wit and vivacity and his genial social nature, no less than for his scholarship. In purely scholastic work he stood high, though not the highest in his class. However, he showed a great variety of abilities which gained him recognition in the university. In his first academic year he won a second scholarship for excellence in Latin, and, in 1843, the Newdigate prize, with his poem on "Cromwell." In 1845 he was elected fellow of Oriel, an honor which was considered the crowning glory of an Oxford career. The Oriel fellowship was especially gratifying to him, because his father, who was now only a grateful memory, had won the same distinction just thirty years before.

To spend four or five years, at the most impressionable period of life, in Oxford, with its beautiful buildings and medieval traditions, could not but make a deep and lasting impression on one so sensitive as Arnold; and twenty years afterward, at the close of the preface to the first series of the *Essays in Criticism*, he pays tribute to the memory of his university in this eloquent outburst of feeling:

Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

"There are our young barbarians, all at play."

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the middle age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side? nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tuebingen. Adorable dreamer! whose heart has been so romantic, who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself

to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines ! Home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties ! . . . Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone ?

The Oxford of Arnold's day, though so rich in traditions, had not lost her ability to originate great causes and train great men for dealing with them. The intellectual life of the undergraduates was by no means confined to classroom activities. Clubs and coteries of various kinds furnished opportunity for the free development of almost every conceivable interest. Arnold belonged to "The Decade," a small debating society, in which the members, according to Lord Coleridge, "fought to the stumps of their intellects." Among our author's colleagues and companions who later achieved fame were Dean Church, Bishop Fraser, Professor Earle, Thomas Hughes, Principal Shairpe, the Froudes, and Arthur Hugh Clough, whose early death Arnold commemorated in the exquisite elegy "Thyrsis," so redolent of the charm of the university city and its surroundings. At the time of Arnold's entering Oxford, Cardinal Newman, in the full maturity of his powers, had not yet left the Church of England, and was preaching those fervid and eloquent sermons which were one of the chief factors in bringing about the so-called Oxford Movement.

The voice that weekly from St. Mary's spake,
As from the unseen world oracular,
Strong as another Wesley, to re-wake
The sluggish heart of England, near and far ;
Voice so intense to win men or repel,
Piercing yet tender, on these spirits fell,
Making them other, higher than they were.

IN PUBLIC OFFICE

Strong as was the appeal of the academic life, Arnold felt, however, that he must take an active part in the affairs of the world, and, after a few months of teaching the classics at Rugby, he became in 1847 private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. This position proved to be a stepping-stone to his appointment, in 1851, as an Inspector of Public Schools. For thirty-five years he gave his best energies to improving the elementary and secondary schools, whereas his literary pursuits had to be carried on irregularly during the intervals of official duties. The spirit which sustained him in this not altogether congenial work is shown in the following extract from the speech made at the time of his retirement from office :

I do not think I have been altogether a bad inspector. I think I have had two qualifications for the post. One is that of having a serious sense of the nature and function of criticism. I from the first sought to see the schools as they really were. Thus it was soon felt that I was fair, and that the teachers had not to apprehend from me crotchets, pedantries, humours, favoritisms, and prejudices. That was one qualification. Another was that I got the habit, very early in my time, of trying to put myself in the place of the teachers whom I was inspecting. I will tell you how that came about. Though I am a schoolmaster's son, I confess that school teaching or school inspecting is not the line of life I should naturally have chosen. I adopted it in order to marry a lady who is here to-night, and who feels your kindness as warmly and gratefully as I do. My wife and I had a wandering life of it at first. There were but three lay inspectors for all England. My district went right across from Pembroke Dock to Great Yarmouth. We had no home. One of our children was born in a lodging at Derby, with a workhouse, if I recollect right, behind, and a penitentiary in front. But the irksomeness of my new duties was what I felt most, and during the first year or so this

was sometimes almost insupportable. But I met daily in the schools with men and women discharging duties akin to mine,—duties as irksome as mine,—duties less well paid than mine ; and I asked myself, are they on roses? Would not they by nature prefer, many of them, to go where they liked and do what they liked, instead of being shut up in school? I saw them making the best of it ; I saw the cheerfulness and efficiency with which they did their work, and I asked myself again, how do they do it? Gradually it grew into a habit with me to put myself into their places, to try and enter into their feelings, to represent to myself their life ; and, I assure you, I got many lessons from them. This placed me in sympathy with them. I will not accept all the praise you have given me, but I will accept this : I have been fair and I have been sympathetic.

Arnold's first volume of poems appeared in 1848 ; and although he continued to write poetry until the close of his life, most of his poems were written within the next twenty years. In recognition of his poetical abilities he was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857, and at the end of the five-year term he was reappointed. It was not customary for the same person to hold the chair for more than two terms ; so Arnold retired from this position in 1867. His duties had consisted in delivering a few lectures each year, and he had kept his office of inspector at the same time.

One of the advantages of Arnold's office was that he was sent on official visits to the Continent in the interests of education,—in 1859–1860, in 1865, and again in 1885. As he had always been fond of travel, and as these visits brought him into close touch with the thought of the principal countries of western Europe, he found this assignment greatly to his liking. His reports to the Bureau of Education, made from time to time, are so enlightened, so far-sighted, and so full of original suggestions that they form an important contribution to general educational literature.

CLOSING YEARS

Worthy and useful as such work was, it must be a source of regret to all admirers of Arnold that so many years of his life had to be devoted to a task which only his manly spirit kept from becoming distasteful. During the later years of his inspectorship he looked forward to the time when he might give up his office and spend his entire time on literature. With this end in view he devoted himself more and more to lecturing. Lecture tours twice brought him to America, first in 1883 and again in 1886. On the whole he was less successful as a popular lecturer than in any other of his numerous undertakings. In an amusing letter written to Mr. Morley in October, 1882, Arnold speaks of resigning from office. "I announced yesterday at the office my intention of retiring at Easter or Whitsuntide. Gladstone will never promote the author of *Literature and Dogma* if he can help it, and meanwhile my life is drawing to an end, and I have no wish to execute the Dance of Death in an elementary school" (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 207). He did not resign, however, until 1886; and although Mr. Gladstone did not promote him, he did secure for him a pension of two hundred and fifty pounds, "as a public recognition of service to the poetry and literature of England."

Arnold used his newly acquired freedom to write more abundantly than he had before,—in fact, his pen was seldom idle; but he was not destined to live long, to enjoy the exercise of his talents.

On the fifteenth of April, 1888, while at Liverpool (whither he and his wife had gone to meet their eldest daughter, who was on her way home from the United States), he ran to catch a street car. The exertion proved to be too great for him; and a few moments afterward he died, stricken by heart disease, much as his father had been.

A DESCRIPTION OF ARNOLD

Although sixty-five years old at the time of his death, Arnold appeared to be much younger. He had never had a severe illness, his spirits were high, and his mental faculties were in their fullest vigor. Professor Tyler, who met him at a breakfast given by Lowell at the American Embassy in London, has left an excellent description of him as he appeared in 1882 :

Matthew Arnold was the great lion of the feast. I expected to see a small, finical sort of a man. Instead of which I found a tall, athletic, rugged fellow, in splendid health, with sonorous voice, prompt and playful in speech, with an air of conscious success, dark hair and complexion and eyes. Lowell seems very fond of him. I had not much chance to talk with him, as he had to go early. But he came and spoke with me before leaving and expressed a great desire to come to America.

In accordance with Arnold's wishes no biography of him has been written. However, his letters have been collected and edited by G. W. E. Russell, and from them we are able to gather a correct impression of his personality. His life seems to have been the embodiment of the doctrine of harmony and sweet reasonableness which he preached. Far from being the supercilious literary snob, the "high priest of the kid-glove persuasion," idly recommending culture to a practical, hard-working world with which he had little in common, as he was often represented in caricatures of that period, he was one of the most plain, earnest, laborious, and self-sacrificing of men.

ARNOLD THE POET

Arnold was singularly free from the irregularities and vagaries which had characterized so many of the poets of the preceding age. In fact, perhaps his greatest defect of tem-

perament as a poet is that he is too rational. He cannot or will not allow his emotions to dominate him. There is always abundant thought, but he seems to lack the emotional intensity required to fuse his materials and give them the liquid quality characteristic of the highest poetical effects. The qualities of intellect and temperament which made him a critical genius rendered him self-conscious, and unwilling to follow creative impulses until they had first received the approval of his judgment. As a result his thought is almost always poetical, but his expression of it gives the effect of being studied, and too often lacks the stamp of finality and inevitableness so strongly imprinted upon the grand style of Milton at its best. For the qualities of purity of expression, unity, proportion, and classic restraint, he is nearly as eminent as Milton, but he falls far short of Milton's poetic fire.

The failure of Arnold to win wide popularity was due in large measure, no doubt, to the limitation just pointed out; it was due in greater measure, however, I believe, to his subject matter. His prevailing mood is one of inward peace through stoical resignation and consolation,—a mood not very far removed from pessimism. One of his most exquisite and characteristic poems, "Resignation," contains the following description of a poet:

Lean'd on his gate he gazes : tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years ;
Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole ;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace.

Anyone familiar with Arnold's temperament need have no hesitancy in identifying the poet whom he is here portraying.

The sadness and resignation of Arnold is something much more genuine than the romantic despair cultivated by youthful poets for the mere sake of the sensation: it is the sadness and world-weariness born of the complexity of the age in which he lived, with its crowded and struggling populations, its sociological problems demanding solution, its disillusionment after the awakening from the romantic dreams of the early years of the century, its loss of the support and solace offered by religious faith unshaken by the doubts and questionings raised by modern scientific thought.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

"Dover Beach"

In regard to the stoical element in Arnold's poetry, Brownell says:

It is intimately consoling if you are in a mood that needs consolation, and consolation of a severely stoic strain. Otherwise it is not. Now, most people are either rarely in such a mood, or,

when they are, demand consolation that stimulates instead of stifling their self-pity. The poetry, like the music, that intensifies one's mood is inevitably more popular than that which contradicts it.

The most popular and probably the best of Arnold's shorter poems are "Thyrsis," which has already been mentioned; "Rugby Chapel," with its delicate appreciation of the poet's father; "Dover Beach," the concluding lines of which were quoted above; "Lines written in Kensington Gardens"; "Kaiser Dead," a half humorous, half pathetic tribute to his pet dog; the lyric called "Requiescat," beginning with the lines

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!

the sonnet on "Shakespeare"; and the inimitable "Forsaken Merman," with its breath of the sea, its marvelous scenes, suggested rather than described, and the repressed emotion of the haunting lines

Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell forever
The kings of the sea.

Of the longer poems the best are "Tristram and Iseult," "Balder Dead," and "Sohrab and Rustum," of which the last is generally conceded to be Arnold's masterpiece. In a letter to his mother, in May, 1853, he announced the completion of the poem and his opinion of it:

All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and I think it will be generally liked; though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it, a

rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others. But the story is a very noble and excellent one.

The author's judgment proved to be correct in this case: the poem was at once recognized as a classic. The story, although an episode of the great Persian epic *Shah Namah*, is, nevertheless, complete in itself, and forms a perfect epic in brief compass. It more nearly reproduces the impression Homer makes upon a reader who knows Greek well than any other poem in the English language. It possesses in an eminent degree the four qualities which Arnold, in his essay "On Translating Homer," has selected as the chief characteristics of the Greek poet: rapidity of movement, plainness and directness of style and diction, plainness and directness of ideas, and nobleness. A touching story of filial affection and of death through the inexorable working of blind fate is told with a sense of proportion, a tranquil depth of feeling, and a suggestion of reserve power which give it the æsthetic loveliness of perfect literary art. In addition to this, the Homeric echoes awakened on every page are a constant source of pleasure to reward the finished scholar for his studies.

Poems of such quality as the best of Arnold's entitle him to high rank among Victorian poets. He will never enjoy the general popularity of Tennyson and Browning, since he lacks the lyrical gifts of the one, and the buoyant optimism and creative energy of the other; but he will occupy an honored position near them, as one of the chief interpreters of the thought of the middle decades of the last century.

ARNOLD THE CRITIC

In giving the facts of Arnold's life, attention was called to the limited period within which he wrote most of his poems. This period lasted about twenty years, and ended with the

close of his Oxford professorship in 1867. During the remaining years of his life he wrote occasional poems, but his main effort was in the field of criticism; and so important was his contribution to this department of literature that his fame as a prose writer has partially eclipsed his reputation as a poet.

To speak of Arnold's prose works as criticism is to use the term in a very broad sense,—in the sense which he made current by his essay on "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." "Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavor, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." A few pages farther on in the same essay he says of criticism: "Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given them." From these statements it will be seen that Arnold felt the critic's calling to be one of the highest importance. He realized that the action of criticism which he prescribed would be "subtle and indirect," but he had confidence that the benefits would eventually be felt, and felt in a "natural and thence irresistible manner."

In order to make his countrymen receptive to new ideas, he felt that he must first shake them out of their conservatism and "hard unintelligence," their smug complacency, and their contented reliance upon successful materialism. Hence his clever satire on the nobles, the middle classes, and the common people, under the names of Barbarians, Philistines,

and Populace. To the Philistines he devoted special attention, because they constitute the most influential part of the British population. By this term—which means the children of darkness, the materialists, as distinguished from the children of light, the cultured classes—Arnold meant to censure in his countrymen the same traits which Napoleon had in mind when he called the English a nation of shopkeepers.

Arnold's chief endeavor in his writings, as he expresses it in the preface to *Essays in Criticism*, was "to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman." The remedy for Philistinism he conceived to be culture, the development of human perfection as existing in "an inward condition of the mind and spirit and not in an outward set of circumstances." In a phrase used in the lecture on "Celtic Literature" Arnold speaks of culture as "growth in the variety, fullness and sweetness of spiritual life." In "Culture and Anarchy" he states that he is striving to intensify "the impulse to the development of the whole man, to connecting and harmonizing all parts of him, perfecting all, leaving none to take their chance."

For the harmonious development of the whole man Arnold considered the study of literature of prime importance. The study of science alone he thought inclined to develop the intellect at the expense of the emotions, the imagination, and the moral and social qualities. He believed that his country especially needed the influence of Greek civilization in order to develop the æsthetic and perceptive sides of the intellect. Hebraism, which culminated in Puritanism, and which is still dominant among the masses, is, he asserted, one-sided in that it stresses conduct to the neglect of beauty and abstract truth, and thus satisfies only a part of man's nature.

With these central ideas firmly in mind Arnold set to work to give their application to literature, politics, religion,

education, and social life. Enough has been said already to show the general trend of his opinions. On all subjects which he touched his views are interesting and stimulating, and have not failed to make their influence felt.

ARNOLD'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

There was, however, during Arnold's lifetime, a great deal of misunderstanding in regard to his religious views. He was by some considered little better than an atheist. Gladstone, with more insight, humorously remarked that Arnold combined a sincere devotion to the Christian religion with a faculty for presenting it in such a form as was recognizable neither by friend nor foe. Now what Arnold is attacking in "Literature and Dogma," "God and the Bible," and "St. Paul and Protestantism" is not true religion but, rather, the dogmatism which drew its principles from sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century interpretations of the Bible. Arnold saw that the best proof of Christianity is its natural truth. The subtitle of "Literature and Dogma" shows its true character: it is there called "an Essay toward a Better Apprehension of the Bible." Arnold would have the Bible read as literature and interpreted in the light of its appeal to our inner spiritual natures. Broad culture is necessary to avoid a misapprehension of its truths. "No man, who knows nothing else, knows even his Bible," he declared. He would discard dogma as unessential. According to his idea the essence of Christianity consists in "something not very far, at any rate, from this: Grace and peace by the annulment of our ordinary self through the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Christ."

Who can doubt that Arnold in thus presenting the attractiveness of Christ's teachings has done a worthy service to the cause of the higher life, the best that is known and

thought in the world? "It is dogma," says Brownell, "that has lost its hold on serious minds, and Arnold's great concern in his religious writings is to save religion from going with it." Arnold's earnestness in his treatment of religious subjects is shown by the fact that he regarded "Literature and Dogma" as his greatest work. If the world at large has given the preference to his works on literary criticism, as seems to be the case, it is, no doubt, because literature has greater permanency of interest than is possessed by a passing phase of religious belief.

LITERARY CRITICISM

By training as well as by temperament Arnold was at his best in the field of pure literary criticism, to which he brought all the greater wealth of ideas because of his interest in problems of the day. To breadth of reading, keenness of perception, delicacy of taste, and sensitiveness to æsthetic beauty, he joined an almost perfect style, at once easy and colloquial and yet polished to the highest degree of grace and urbanity. Literature, especially poetry, had been the chief interest and comfort of his life. In the essay on "The Study of Poetry" he thus sets forth his conception of poetry and its high destiny:

In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life.

In the essay on Wordsworth Arnold says that a "criticism of life" must necessarily have a moral significance, since "moral ideas are really so main a part of human life." No

one will deny that moral significance is bound up with human life in a vital way, and consequently with poetry, the artistic representation of life; and yet to say that all great poetry must deal with moral ideas, even in this broad sense of the term, is to confine poetry within rather narrow limits. Few critics would agree with Arnold's opinion that Chaucer cannot be considered a great classic because his treatment of life lacks "high seriousness." After all, the question is one of emphasis, and the severest stricture that can be passed upon Arnold is that he sometimes overstresses the importance of solidity of thought and slights the claims of the lighter graces.

In his *Essays in Criticism* Arnold is interested principally in revealing the temperament of the writers whom he discusses, the spiritual attributes of their personalities as shown in their writings; and herein lies his strength. His fineness of insight and his power of expressing adequately his perceptions, with due regard to light and shading and to their proper perspective, make these essays an unfailing source of intellectual delight. How penetrating his vision and how deft his mastery of expression, for example, when he characterizes Shelley as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain"! How broad and just his appreciation when he says that Christianity is "the greatest and happiest stroke ever made for human perfection"!

Often there is a mingling of deep thought with playful satirization of his adversaries, as when he has been rallied for not defining "the grand style," and says:

Alas! the grand style is the last matter in the world for verbal definition to deal with adequately. One may say of it as is said of faith: "One must feel it in order to know what it is." But, as of faith, so too we may say of nobleness, of the grand style: "Woe to those who know it not!" yet this expression, though indefinable, has a charm; one is the better for considering it; *bonum*

est, nos hic esse; nay, one loves to try to explain it, though one knows that one must speak imperfectly. For those, then, who ask the question, What is the grand style? with sincerity, I will try to make some answer, inadequate as it must be. For those who ask it mockingly I have no answer, except to repeat to them, with compassionate sorrow, the Gospel words: *Moriemini in peccatis vestris*, Ye shall die in your sins.

In all his prose writings Arnold shows the adroitness and skill of one endowed with a keen journalistic sense. He has given the study of literature a fresh hold upon a wide circle of readers, and his pages are illuminated by an intellectual light which has made clearer the distinction between truly great literature and that of mediocre quality. By stimulating appreciation of the best and by showing the interest and pleasure to be derived from contemplating the productions of the choice and master spirits of the world, he has vindicated the dignity and worth of his gospel of culture. He is far more than a great literary critic: the freedom which he exercised in dealing with our accepted ideas, weighing, testing, and revaluing them, entitles him to be considered a philosopher, as well. His ultimate purpose is to teach the art of living. All his thoughts on education, religion, literature, social and political life, interesting and vital as they are in themselves, are only aids to this ultimate purpose. When Arnold says that criticism should be "disinterested," he means that it should be free from the state of mind which values things merely in proportion to their immediate material utility. Where he differs from most so-called practical men is that he goes deeper into the causes and relations of things. They would resort to makeshift methods, such as infusing into the masses ready-made opinions and prepared knowledge sufficient to enable them to cope with their immediate surroundings; Arnold would make them completely and harmoniously developed individuals, capable of a higher

happiness in the life of the spirit. Near the close of "Culture and anarchy" he summarizes his ideas as follows :

Socrates has drunk his hemlock and is dead ; but in his own breast does not every man carry about with him a possible Socrates, in that power of disinterested play of consciousness upon his stock notions and habits, of which this wise and admirable man gave all through his lifetime the great example, and which was the secret of his incomparable influence ? And he who leads men to call forth and exercise in themselves this power, and who busily calls it forth and exercises it in himself, is at the present moment, perhaps, as Socrates was in his time, more in concert with the vital working of men's minds, and more effectually significant, than any House of Commons' orator, or practical operator in politics.

THE ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH

It will be seen from the introductory essays on Wordsworth and Arnold that they had much in common. Both were great lovers of nature, although Wordsworth was primarily an interpreter of nature, whereas Arnold took an attitude more nearly akin to that of the Greeks, who delighted in portraying natural scenes with lifelike reality. Wordsworth's poetry has always the solid substance, the high seriousness, and the severe simplicity which Arnold prized so highly. Caring little for mere metrical effects Arnold seems scarcely conscious of Wordsworth's inferiority to many other poets in melody and in variety of verse forms. Hence it is that his "Essay on Wordsworth" is especially sympathetic.

During Arnold's early life he lived for considerable periods of time at Fox Howe, in Wordsworth's neighborhood, the families were friends, and the younger poet felt the greatest reverence for the elder; yet his essay is entirely uninfluenced by personal feeling, and attempts to estimate Wordsworth's poetry on the broad basis of its ultimate place in world literature.

The essay was written in 1879, as an introduction to a volume of selections from Wordsworth's poems which Arnold was preparing. It serves the double purpose of estimating Wordsworth as a poet and of justifying the volume which it was written to introduce. Too much praise cannot well be given to the easy, colloquial manner in which Arnold leads the reader into the subject by quoting Macaulay's remark about Wordsworth's popularity. The development of thought in the essay by paragraphs is as follows :

1-4. Introduction: history of Wordsworth's popularity.
5. Literature should be judged by international standards.
6-8. Our judgments of ourselves may be faulty, as examples here given prove.

9. Restatement of the fact that such an international judgment is possible and worth while.

10. Wordsworth, Arnold thinks, will ultimately be rated above all his English contemporaries, as the greatest poet since Milton.

11. Wordsworth should stand above all European poets since Molière, with the exception of Goethe.

12-16. Wordsworth has not gained the recognition to which he is entitled (12), because his unevenness is an obstacle (13), which should be removed (14), and because his classification of his poems has been injurious to them (15); this should be superseded by the Greek classification (16).

17. The body of superior work left by Wordsworth is really much larger than has usually been supposed.

18. On the largeness of this body of work Arnold bases the claim for Wordsworth's title to recognition.

19. The purpose of Arnold's edition is to give Wordsworth's work a chance. Arnold will, however, indicate wherein he thinks the superior quality of Wordsworth's poetry lies.

20. The most essential part of poetic greatness consists in the noble and profound application of ideas to life, a thing in which Wordsworth excels.

21. Voltaire considered English poetry excellent because of the energy and depth with which it deals with moral ideas.

22. Human life is preponderatingly concerned with moral ideas.

23. Proof that the greatest poetry is a criticism of life.

24. Epictetus quoted, to prove that moral ideas are the most important subject for literature to deal with.

25. Wordsworth and Gautier contrasted. The superiority of Wordsworth and the superiority of English poetry are due to dealing adequately with moral ideas.

26. Wordsworth's greatness lies in his dealing with more of life than others do.

27. His greatness is not due to his formal philosophy, as Wordsworthians would have us think.

28. Passage from "The Excursion" cited as an example of barrenness of mere philosophy.

29-31. Further proof that poetic fitness is not due to philosophic truth and that Wordsworthians admire the wrong thing in Wordsworth.

32. Wordsworth's greatness consists in the extraordinary power with which he has made us feel the joy offered us in simple, primary affections and duties.

33. He makes unfailing joy at its source accessible to all.

34. Nevertheless, when uninspired, Wordsworth is extremely dull.

35-37. An estimate of Wordsworth's style: he lacks the genius for style possessed by Shakespeare and Milton (35); in simplicity he is similar to Burns (36); his most characteristic power is in a plain, bald style and simple subjects.

38. Wordsworth's best poems have a successful balance of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution.

39-41. Summary and conclusion: by reason of the great body of his good work Wordsworth deserves high rank as a poet (39); the purpose of Arnold's selections is to present him to advantage (40); when he is presented in his true light he will shine as one of the chief glories of English poetry, not as the sage and pure master of a clique.

WORDSWORTH

I remember hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him.

The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for some time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist; Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength; this in-

fluence told entirely in favour of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale
5 grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognised, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*. Yes, he answered modestly, he had
10 written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr. Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Wordsworth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had
15 been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favour, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of
20 poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr. Tennyson gained them. Mr. Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public, and the new generations. Even in
1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity
25 was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succour from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted
30 eulogists; and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost every one who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined. Even the abundance of Mr. Palgrave's fine and skilfully chosen specimens of Wordsworth,

in the *Golden Treasury*, surprised many readers, and gave offence to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordsworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with 5 impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts. 'Glory,' said M. Renan the other day, 'glory after all is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity.' Wordsworth was a 10 homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for 15 intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal 20 which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognised by the verdict of such a confederation as a master, or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory; a glory 25 which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honour and acceptance. A nation, 30 again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which of our supposed suc-

cesses are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own
5 things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it!
We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We
extol the 'unrivalled happiness' of our national civilisation.
But then comes a candid friend, and remarks that our upper
class is materialised, our middle class vulgarised, and our
10 lower class brutalised. We are proud of our painting, our
music. But we find that in the judgment of other people
our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We
are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the
world is with us; we find that in the judgment of other people,
15 too, Newton among the dead, and Mr. Darwin among the liv-
ing, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now
poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man,
that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the
20 truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently
in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating suc-
cess here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive
at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our
own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not
25 decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly
in English eulogy of Shakespeare, with much of provincial
infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current
amongst our neighbours the French—people of taste, acute-
ness, and quick literary tact—not a hundred years ago,
30 about our great poets. The old *Biographie Universelle* no-
tices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets
among the chief poets of the world, and says that this
is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever
seem admissible. And the scornful, disparaging things said

by foreigners about Shakespeare and Milton, and about our national over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in every one's remembrance.

A great change has taken place, and Shakespeare is now generally recognised, even in France, as one of the greatest 5 of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille and with Victor Hugo! But let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I 10 suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. With Shakespeare, he says, 'prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic.' And he goes on: 'Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm 15 of thought; along with his dazzling prose, Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks.' M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it; it would not be easy 20 to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakespeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that 'nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of 25 the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes*,' and that 'Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence,' then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely national recognition, and that in favour both of Milton and of Shake- 30 speare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone.

I come back to M. Renan's praise of glory, from which I started. Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court of final appeal.

definitive glory. And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved. Every establishment of such a
5 real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it. To the poet himself it can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him.

10 Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him. He is not fully recognised at home; he is not recognised at all abroad. Yet I firmly believe that the poet-
15 ical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the
20 comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it,—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only
25 who are dead),—I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that Wordsworth seems to me to have left
30 a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further, that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent

since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Rückert, and Heine for Germany; Filicaia, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy; Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André 5 Chénier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achieve- 10 ment it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, 15 most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth's performance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs.

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is 20 a just claim, if Wordsworth's place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakespeare and 25 Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognise him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recog- 30 nition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

"The Excursion" and "The Prelude," his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work. His best work

is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them; so inferior to them that it seems
5 wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he
10 knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best
15 work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them; but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often
20 dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior
25 work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognised far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a
30 classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only,—a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.

There is another thing. Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy, poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and reflection, and so on. His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory. Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin, which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others.

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible. We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks for kinds of poetry; that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to. It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs; whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac. But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it. Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half a dozen. I maintain, on the other hand, that what strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth's superiority, is the great and ample body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his in-

ferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours!

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison
5 of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not
10 all of it, of course, of equal value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and
15 simple; but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body
20 of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until
25 this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him
30 to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognise it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognised, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his

superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives 5 his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

On man, on nature, and on human life,

10

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas 'on man, on nature, and on human life.'

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked 15 that 'no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation.' And he adds: 'There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets.' Voltaire does not mean, by 'treating in poetry moral ideas,' the composing moral and didactic poems;—that 20 brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above 'of the noble and profound application of ideas to life'; and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. 25 If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every 30 man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term

moral. Whatever bears upon the question, 'how to live,' comes under it.

Nor love thy life, nor hate ; but, what thou liv'st,
Live well ; how long or short, permit to heaven.

5 In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

10 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says that

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep,

15 he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation ; and they err who suppose
20 that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term *ideas* here the term *moral*
25 makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this : that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life ; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to
30 life,—to the question : How to live. Morals are often treated

in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry 5 which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words: 'Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque.' Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude 10 ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word *life*, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry 15 of indifference towards *life*.

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with 'the best and master thing' for us, as he called it, the concern how to live. Some people were 20 afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home, 'As if a man, journeying home, 25 and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. "But this inn is taking." And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage 30 merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you

forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care
 5 for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them.'

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and
 10 never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

15 Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope.
 And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
 Of blessed consolations in distress,
 Of moral strength and intellectual power,
 Of joy in widest commonalty spread—

20 then we have a poet intent on 'the best and master thing,' and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity's sake, that he deals with *life*, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets,—this dealing with what is really
 25 life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

30 Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Vol-

taire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages, with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

Quique pii vates et Phoebo digna locuti,

5

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent;—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more *of life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully. 10

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is 15 sound; that his 'ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's'; that his poetry is informed by ideas which 'fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought.' But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due 20 rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of 'a scientific system of thought,' and the more 25 that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy. 30

"The Excursion" abounds with philosophy, and therefore "The Excursion" is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work.

'Duty exists,' says Wordsworth, in "The Excursion"; and then he proceeds thus—

5 . . . Immutably survive,
 For our support, the measures and the forms,
 Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,
 Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really
 10 not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the centre of Wordsworth's philosophy, as 'an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of
 15 systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's'—

20 . . . One adequate support
 For the calamities of mortal life
 Exists, one only;—an assured belief
 That the procession of our fate, howe'er
 Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
 Of infinite benevolence and power;
 Whose everlasting purposes embrace
 All accidents, converting them to good.

That is doctrine such as we hear in church too, religious and
 25 philosophic doctrine; and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which we require from a poet, and in
 30 which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the 'intimations' of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth,—

the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds,—this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The 5 instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the ma- 10 jority of educated persons, the love of nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achieve- 15 ments of the Greek race: 'It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote; but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things.'

Finally, the 'scientific system of thought' in Wordsworth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the devout Words- 20 worthian accepts—

O for the coming of that glorious time
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
 And best protection, this Imperial Realm,
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit 25
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
 Them who are born to serve her and obey;
 Binding herself by statute to secure,
 For all the children whom her soil maintains,
 The rudiments of letters, and inform 30
 The mind with moral and religious truth.

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him

as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald
 5 heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

10 'But turn we,' as Wordsworth says, 'from these bold, bad men,' the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a 'scientific system of thought' in Wordsworth's poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it.
 15 The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary
 20 power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, there-
 25 fore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source,
 30 and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial

and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of "The Sailor's Mother," for example, as of "Lucy Gray." They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. "Lucy Gray" is a beautiful success; "The Sailor's Mother" 5 is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the 'not ourselves.' In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may 10 almost be called, of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left 'weak as in a breaking wave.' I remember hearing him say that 'Goethe's poetry was not inevitable 15 enough.' The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature 20 herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. 25 When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In "The Excursion" we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognise Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of "The Excursion," as a work 30 of poetic style: 'This will never do.' And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well—

5 of Shakespeare; in the

. . . though fall'n on evil days,

On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues—

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton's power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained*,
 10 and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton's imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of
 15 it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton's—

. . . the fierce confederate storm

Of sorrow barricadoed evermore

20 Within the walls of cities;

although even here, perhaps, the power of style, which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style,
 25 which chiefly makes the effectiveness of "Laodameia." Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from "Michael"—

And never lifted up a single stone.

30 There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

The poor inhabitant below
 Was quick to learn and wise to know,
 And keenly felt the friendly glow
 And softer flame;
 But thoughtless follies laid him low
 And stain'd his name.

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Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

15

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatched. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes; from the profound sincerity with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of "Resolution and Independence"; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

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25

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for "Laodameia" and for the great "Ode"; but if I am to tell the very truth, I find "Laodameia" not wholly free from something artificial, and the great "Ode" not wholly free from

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something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as "Michael," "The Fountain," "The Highland Reaper." And poems with the peculiar
5 and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is
10 Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which
15 they can never give. Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom. Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to
20 find his superiors.

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume. I by no means say that it contains all which in Wordsworth's poems is interesting. Except
25 in the case of "Margaret," a story composed separately from the rest of "The Excursion," and which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it. But under the conditions im-
30 posed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him.

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians; and if we are

to get Wordsworth recognised by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. But I am a Wordsworthian myself. I can read with pleasure and edification "Peter Bell," and the whole series of "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," and the address to Mr. Wilkinson's spade, and even the "Thanksgiving Ode";—everything of Wordsworth, I think, except "Vaudracour and Julia." It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood, and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects. But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very chief glories of English Poetry; and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry. Let us lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognised as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems:

They will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.



NOTES

WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

"This arose," said Wordsworth, "out of my observations of the affecting music of these birds hanging in this way in the London streets during the freshness and stillness of the Spring morning."

Wood Street, Lothbury, Cheapside: streets in the heart of the business district of London, near the Bank of England.

WE ARE SEVEN

This poem was written at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798. "The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793."—WORDSWORTH

"In the poem of 'We are Seven,' which brings into day for the first time a profound fact in the abysses of human nature, namely, that the mind of an infant cannot admit the idea of death, any more than the fountain of light can comprehend the aboriginal darkness; the little mountaineer, who furnishes the text for this lovely strain, she whose fulness of life could not brook the gloomy faith in a grave, is yet (for the effect upon the reader) brought into connection with the reflex shadows of the grave: and if she herself has *not*, the reader *has*, the gloom of that contemplation obliquely irradiated, as raised in relief upon his imagination, even by *her*. Death and its sunny antipole are forced into connection."—DE QUINCEY

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

This poem and the one following express Wordsworth's early attitude toward nature. The two principal ideas which Wordsworth brings out are the joyousness of nature, and the power of nature to heal the sufferings that the human race endures because of "what man has made of man."

TINTERN ABBEY

This poem was written in 1798 and was published the same year, being the last poem in the *Lyrical Ballads*. "No poem of mine," said Wordsworth, "was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol."

This poem traces the changes which Wordsworth's feeling for nature underwent from childhood to maturity. Compare what is said here with what is said in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

"Wordsworth has shown by the subtle intensity of his own emotion how the contemplation of Nature can be made a revealing agency, like Love or Prayer,—an opening, if indeed there be any opening, into the transcendent world."—MYERS

In a note in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth says, "I have not ventured to call this Poem an Ode; but it was written with a hope that in the transitions, and the impassioned music of the versification, would be found the principal requisites of that species of composition."

THE "LUCY" POEMS

These five poems form a group called the "Lucy" poems. All were written in Germany except the one beginning "I travelled among unknown men," which was probably written shortly after Wordsworth's return to England.

The river Dove, of the second poem, is a branch of the Trent and rises on the borders of Derby and Stafford, near Buxton Hill.

It is not known whether any original of Lucy ever existed, or whether these poems are wholly of the imagination. De Quincey believed that there had been a real person who served as a basis for these compositions. However, I cannot think that Lucy was other than a creation of Wordsworth's imagination.

LUCY GRAY

"It was founded on a circumstance told me by my sister, of a little girl who, not far from Halifax, in Yorkshire, was bewildered in a snow-storm. Her footsteps were tracked by her parents to the middle of a

lock of a canal, and no other vestige of her, backward or forward, could be traced. The body, however, was found in the canal. The way in which the incident was treated, and the spiritualizing of the character, might furnish hints for contrasting the imaginative influences which I have endeavoured to throw over common life, with Crabbe's matter-of-fact style of handling subjects of the same kind."—WORDSWORTH

MICHAEL

Written at Town-end, Grasmere, between October and December, 1800, and published in the second volume of the new edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, which is dated 1800.

"The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere."—WORDSWORTH

In a letter to Charles James Fox, dated January 14, 1801, Wordsworth gives the following account of "Michael": "In the two poems, 'The Brothers' and 'Michael,' I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called statesmen [*i.e.* estates-men], men of respectable education, who daily labour on their little properties. . . . Their little tract of land serves as a kind of rallying-point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten."

Since Wordsworth lived so many years of his life among the dalesmen in the north of England, it will be worth while to quote Myers's excellent description of this robust class. "To those," he says, "who wish to deduce the character of a population from the character of their race and surroundings the peasantry of Cumberland and Westmoreland form an attractive theme. Drawn in great part from the strong Scandinavian stock, they dwell in a land solemn and beautiful as Norway itself, but without Norway's rigour and penury, and with still lakes and happy rivers instead of Norway's inarming melancholy sea. They are a mountain folk; but their mountains are no precipices of insuperable snow, such as keep the dwellers in some Swiss hamlet shut in ignorance and stagnating in idiocy. These barriers divide only to concentrate, and environ only to endear; their guardianship is but enough to give an added unity to each group of kindred homes, and

thus it is that the Cumbrian dalesmen have afforded perhaps as near a realization as human fates have yet allowed of the rural society which statesmen desire for their country's greatness. They have given an example of substantial comfort strenuously won; of home affections intensified by independent strength; of isolation without ignorance, and of a shrewd simplicity; of an hereditary virtue which needs no support from fanaticism, and to which honor is more than law."

"In the matter of style this is the most perfect of all Wordsworth's narrative poems; perhaps in no poem of his is there such complete subordination of language to the thought; the two are related in such a way as to illustrate a style which conserves the mental economy of the reader. The theme and the language are equally simple; there is no attempt to heighten the effect by artifices of 'poetic diction.' This being so, what is there in the poem that renders it the delight of all who are familiar with it? It is its sympathy, its sincerity, its vigor—that tone which comes from living and thinking close to the heart of things."—GEORGE

After reading this poem the student should read again what Arnold says about Wordsworth's style on pages 148-150.

Greenhead Ghyll: a glen not far from Dove Cottage, Town-end, Grasmere, where Wordsworth was living at the time when this poem was written. A ghyll, or gill, is a deep, narrow ravine with a small stream running through it. In 1832, in a letter to a friend, Dr. Arnold of Rugby tells of taking a walk up Greenhead Ghyll with Wordsworth, to see the unfinished sheepfold described in "Michael." All traces of the sheepfold have now disappeared.

Easedale: a valley six or eight miles long, northwest of Grasmere. It is surrounded by mountains on three sides and is a very secluded spot.

Dunmail-Raise: the pass over which the road goes from Grasmere to Keswick. It is about eight hundred feet above sea level, whereas the neighboring mountain peaks are over three thousand feet in elevation.

Richard Bateman: explained thus by Wordsworth in a note to an early edition of the poem: "The story alluded to is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel; and it is on the right-hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside."

Sheepfold: "It may be proper to inform some readers that a sheepfold in these mountains is an unroofed building of stone walls, with different divisions. It is generally placed by a brook, for the convenience of washing the sheep; but it is also useful as a shelter for them,

and as a place to drive them into, to enable the shepherds conveniently to single out one or more for any particular purpose."—WORDSWORTH

THE SPARROW'S NEST

"At the end of the garden of my father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace that commanded a fine view of the river Derwent and Cockermouth Castle. This was our favorite playground. The terrace-wall, a low one, was covered with closely clipt privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds that built their nests there."—WORDSWORTH

Emmeline: the poet's sister Dorothy, who is referred to in many of Wordsworth's poems. See "To a Butterfly," "It was an April morning," "To my Sister," "Tintern Abbey," and various passages in "The Prelude." The later history of this gifted woman is very sad. In 1832 she suffered a severe illness which left her impaired in mind and body, and, although she lingered on for more than twenty years, she never recovered from the melancholy which settled over her.

"I GRIEVED FOR BUONAPARTÉ"

"In the cottage, Town-end, Grasmere, one afternoon in 1801, my sister read to me the Sonnets of Milton. I had long been well acquainted with them, but I was particularly struck on that occasion with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them,—in character so totally different from the Italian, and still more so from Shakespeare's fine Sonnets. I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three Sonnets the same afternoon, the first I ever wrote except an irregular one at school. Of these three, the only one I distinctly remember is, 'I grieved for Buonaparté.' One was never written down; the third, which was, I believe, preserved, I cannot particularise."—WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth's memory is evidently at fault here, for according to Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal the date was May 21, 1802.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

"Written on the roof of a coach on my way to France."—WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth dated this sonnet September 3, 1802, probably because the weather is usually more settled in that month than in midsummer, although the sonnet was written July 31.

Dorothy Wordsworth records in her Journal: "We mounted the Dover coach at Charing Cross. It was a beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles."

"IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE"

"Composed," Wordsworth says, "on the beach near Calais in August, 1802."

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

On May 16, 1797, Napoleon entered the city of Venice and proclaimed the end of the Republic. Henceforth it was buffeted to and fro between France and Austria until 1814, when it was assigned to Austria by the new coalition.

Hold the gorgeous east in fee: a reference to the conquests of Venice during the Fourth Crusade.

Safeguard of the west: Venice checked the Turks in their advance upon the Western world during the fifteenth century.

Child of Liberty: Venice was founded on some small islands in the Gulf of Venice by refugees from Aquileia, the capital of the province, when Attila invaded the district of Venetia in 452.

Took unto herself a Mate: a reference to the ceremony of "marrying the Adriatic" in token of the maritime supremacy of the city. The ceremony was performed on Ascension Day, and consisted in the Doge's throwing a ring into the sea from the State galley.

The conduct of Venice during the later years of the Republic was not so heroic as might have been expected from its glorious past.

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802

"This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth."—WORDSWORTH

LONDON, 1802

With this fine apostrophe to Milton compare the following extract from the third book of "The Prelude." Milton had been one of Wordsworth's predecessors at the University of Cambridge.

"Yea, our blind Poet, who in his later day,
Stood almost single; uttering odious truth—
Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
An awful soul—I seemed to see him here
Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride."

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL

The experience on which this poem was founded is recorded in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. On Sunday, August 28, 1803, the poet, his sister, and Coleridge were walking from Loch Katrine over to Loch Lomond when they overtook two girls dressed in gray plaid, one of whom was exceedingly beautiful. "They answered us," says Dorothy, "so sweetly that we were quite delighted, at the same time that they stared at us with an innocent look of wonder. I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls, while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with the rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct; without difficulty, yet slow, like that of a foreign speech."

Consenting: agreeing together, the primary meaning of the word, from Latin *consentire*, "to agree."

This fall of water: a small but beautiful waterfall about thirty feet high, at Inversnaid, near the shores of Loch Lomond.

The silent lake: Loch Lomond, a romantic lake surrounded by mountains and dotted with islands, considered one of the most picturesque spots in Scotland, although Wordsworth preferred the smaller lakes to it.

"It is in such poems as this that we see illustrated the *pure*, as distinguished from the *ornate*, in poetic style. The pure style depends for

its efficacy upon penetrating at once to the heart of scene or character, and using only such accessories of imagery and dress as are essential to a grasp of the spirit of the whole; while the ornate depends upon the number of striking allusions, the wealth of figure, and abundance of drapery."—GEORGE

THE SOLITARY REAPER

During Wordsworth's tour in Scotland he had often seen reapers, both men and women, working in the fields alone. The poem was suggested by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's *Tour of Scotland*, which Wordsworth read in manuscript at this time, as it was not published until 1824. In a note to the edition of 1807 he says that he took the last line verbatim. The sentence is the following: "Passed a female who was reaping alone; she sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard; her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

SONNET

COMPOSED AT [NEIDPATH] CASTLE

Neidpath Castle: near Peebles, overlooking the Tweed. On September 17, 1803, Scott told Wordsworth about the destruction of the trees by the Duke of Queensberry, and the next day Wordsworth wrote this sonnet. Compare this poem with Cowper's "Poplar Field," where a similar subject is treated. It will be noticed at once how much more passive Cowper's emotion is.

YARROW UNVISITED

"At Clovenford, being so near to the Yarrow, we could not but think of the possibility of going thither, but came to the conclusion of reserving the pleasure for some future time, in consequence of which, after our return, William wrote the poem."—Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth

Yarrow: a beautiful stream which flows out of St. Mary's Lake and empties into the Tweed. It is famous in ballad literature. See Logan's ballad "The Braes of Yarrow" and the popular ballads "Willie's Drowned in Yarrow," "The Douglas Tragedy," "The Lament of the Border Widow," and "The Dowie Dens of Yarrow."

Clovenford: located just above the junction of Galla Water and the Tweed.

Winsome Marrow: a phrase borrowed from the old ballads, as are many other expressions in the poem. "Marrow" means mate or partner and is perhaps derived from French *mari*. It refers here to the poet's sister Dorothy, from whose Journal of the tour we have derived so much information in regard to the genesis of her brother's poems.

Galla Water, Leader: branches of the Tweed.

Haughs: lowlands along the course of a river, often flooded during heavy rains.

Dryborough: on the banks of the Tweed below Melrose. It is famous for its ruined abbey, one of the most beautiful in Scotland.

Lintwhites: linnets.

Tiviot-dale: the dale of the Teviot, which joins the Tweed near Roxburgh.

Holms: river islands, or low flat lands along a river.

Strath: a valley of considerable size, often having a river running through it which gives it its distinctive name, as Strathdon, Strathearn, etc.

St. Mary's Lake: the source of the Yarrow. Aubrey de Vere quotes Wordsworth as saying, "The scene, when I saw it, with its still and dim lake, under the dusky hills, was one of utter loneliness; there was *one* swan, and one only, stemming the water, and the pathetic loveliness of the region gave importance to the one companion of that swan—its own white image in the water."—DE VERE, *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 277

In connection with this poem the student should read "Yarrow Visited." Some interesting references to the poet's visit to Yarrow are found also in the "Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg," p. 101.

"SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT"

This poem expresses the different phases of the poet's affection for his wife. The first four lines, which were originally written for a part of "To a Highland Girl," served as a starting point. "Though beginning in this way," said he, "it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious."

"I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD"

While Wordsworth and Dorothy were walking in Gowbarrow Park, by the side of Ullswater, they saw the daffodils here described. "I never saw daffodils so beautiful," says she in her Journal. "They grew

among the mossy stones, about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew directly over the lake to them. They looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing."

It is said that the two fine lines

"They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude"

were contributed by the poet's wife.

ODE TO DUTY

Wetherell translates the Latin sentence at the beginning of this poem as follows: "No longer good by resolve, but so educated by habit that not only can I do right, but I cannot do otherwise than right."

"In Wordsworth's ideal of human life the 'genial sense of youth' is strengthened and confirmed by mature reason; the truths of early intuitions become the fixed principles of later life."—GEORGE

This noble poem will require careful study if the reader is to understand it thoroughly.

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God! With this compare the first line of Gray's "Hymn to Adversity":

"Daughter of Jove, relentless power."

The student should compare the thought and the stanzaic structure of the two poems.

Unchartered: unrestricted or ungoverned by law.

ELEGIAC STANZAS

PEELE CASTLE

These stanzas express Wordsworth's feelings toward the sea after his youngest brother's death. Captain John Wordsworth was drowned off the Bill of Portland when his ship, an East Indiaman, went down on February 5, 1805. He was an unusual man, so devoted to literature and philosophy that he was known as "the philosophical captain." He had prospered and was on what he expected to be his last trip. Upon his return he was going to settle in the Lake District near his brother and sister. The contrast between the calm of the castle and the sea as he saw it, on the one hand, and the tumult pictured in the painting,

on the other, was symbolical to Wordsworth of the contrast in his life before and after his sorrow had come upon him. Wordsworth has thus described his brother John: "Of all human beings whom I ever met he was the man of the most rational desires, the most sedate habits, and the most perfect self-command. He was modest and gentle, and shy even to disease, but this was wearing off. In everything his judgment was sound and original and his eye for the beauties of nature was as fine and delicate as ever poet or painter was gifted with. . . . I never heard an oath or even an indelicate expression or allusion from him in my life; his modesty was equal to that of the purest woman."

Sir George Beaumont was one of the first men of distinction to appreciate the transcendent genius of Wordsworth, and they became fast friends. He was a descendant of the Elizabethan dramatist, and was a patron of literature as well as a painter of ability. At his death, in 1827, he left Wordsworth a legacy of a hundred pounds a year to enable him to travel every summer.

There are two Peele Castles; but the one referred to in this poem is in Lancaster, just south of Barrow-in-Furness. Wordsworth spent four weeks of his summer vacation with his cousin Mrs. Barker near Peele Castle in 1794.

The Kind: human kind; that is, human beings.

A COMPLAINT

It is supposed that this poem refers to some coolness which had come between Wordsworth and Coleridge. Coleridge was addicted to opium at this time and was not always responsible for his feelings and acts.

"THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US"

Proteus: a sea god who was supposed to be gifted with prophecy, but who changed himself into all sorts of horrible shapes in order to frighten away anyone who would question him.

Triton: another sea god, reputed to be the son of Neptune, god of the sea.

TO SLEEP

Nearly all the Elizabethan poets wrote sonnets "To Sleep." Compare also the fine passage in *Macbeth* beginning "Methought I heard a voice cry 'sleep no more,'" Act II, scene ii, and the famous soliloquy of the king at the beginning of the third act of Henry IV.

TO THE MEMORY OF RAISLEY CALVERT

For Raisley Calvert see the introductory essay, p. 8.

ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

"This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere. Two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in advertising here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere—

A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death!—

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we all have reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—

Obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishing; etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain

to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favour. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the Immortality of the Soul, I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.

"The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

WORDSWORTH

The first four stanzas express the child's feeling for the gloriousness and joyousness of nature and the fact that an older person loses some of this appreciation, or can realize it fully only by the remembrance of earlier feelings.

Stanzas 5, 6, 7, and 8 explain the reasons for the fact noted in the first four stanzas. The child has finer intuitions than the grown man, whose perceptions and feelings are more and more engrossed by the worldly things about him, whereas the child is "Nature's Priest"; that is, the interpreter of nature as the priest is the interpreter of religion. Yet the child is unconscious of his blessedness and longs to grow up, as is shown by his playing at being the persons on the "humorous stage."

The remainder of the poem is devoted to the thought that we should be thankful for the memories of childhood and for the fleeting glimpses into the spiritual realm still given us, rather than lament what we have lost. The "years that bring the philosophic mind" give life a meaning apart from the feelings and intuitions of childhood,—a meaning due to the insight and sympathy of a more thoughtful kind that come from having "kept watch o'er man's mortality."

This outline of the main trend of the thought is given in its briefest and barest form in the hope that it may assist the student to follow the

poet's general meaning without being bewildered by the wealth and poetic beauty of the details and by the suggestions of vague and mysterious thoughts which lie on the borderland of consciousness.

Coronal: the crown worn by the Greeks and Romans at their festivals.

May-morning: suggestive of the May Day festivities of "merrie England." For a good contemporary description of them read Herrick's "Corinna's Going a-Maying."

Foster-child: Man is looked upon as the foster child of earth because he is only a sojourner here for a time, being essentially a spiritual being from another world.

A six years' Darling: Coleridge's young son Hartley is said to have been in Wordsworth's mind when he wrote this description of a child and its occupations.

Humorous stage: a reference to Shakespeare's seven ages of man as given in *As You Like It*, Act II, scene vii.

Thou best Philosopher: "We can only catch the main idea among expressions of the child as the best philosopher, the eye among the blind, . . . the mighty prophet, the seer blest—expressions which taken separately have scarcely any recognizable meaning. By taking them all together, we feel rather than see that Wordsworth intended to say that the child, having lately come from a perfect existence, in which he saw truth directly, and was at home with God, retains, unknown to us, that vision—and, because he does, is the best philosopher, since he sees at once that which we through philosophy are endeavoring to reach; is the mighty prophet, because in his actions and speech he tells unconsciously the truths he sees, but the sight of which we have lost; is more closely haunted by God, more near to the immortal life, more purely and brightly free, because he half shares in the pre-existent life and glory out of which he has come."—STOPFORD BROOKE

Prophet: used in the sense in which it is used in the Bible; namely, one who utters forth truths, not one who foretells.

"The Ode on Immortality marks the highest limit which the tide of poetic inspiration has reached in England within this century, or indeed since the days of Milton."—SHARP

"The ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet cannot be conveyed, save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is suffi-

ciently plain, and they will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the Platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe that Plato himself ever meant or taught it."—COLERIDGE

The following quotation is stimulating, although the author of it seems to read meanings into the poem which Wordsworth does not express in this particular poem. Judging him by his other poems, it is probable that he had these ideas in mind, even though they are not definitely expressed.

"The chief value of the poem arises from the fact that it never descends to the plane of mere argument; it ever keeps on the high ground of the essential identity of our childish instincts and our enlightened reason. The deepest truths of the soul cannot be argued, they must be *lived*. In the first four stanzas we have the experience of our common humanity. Doomed as we are to go in company with fear and sorrow,—'miserable train,'—how are we to prevent ourselves from 'wronging the joy of the life that is about us'? The Poet, in the next four stanzas, answers the question by reviewing the history of the soul, and tracing the steps by which it reached that stage. He finds that it is because the soul has become centered in the seen and the temporal, and has thus lost its glory and its beauty; it has well-nigh destroyed its spiritual vision. In the concluding stanzas he shows us that this may be regained and that the melancholy fear may be subdued by a return to those simple ways in which our childhood walked. We must become as little children in this life of the soul, and by blending early intuition and mature reason we shall be able to see into the life of things. Every line of the poem is worthy of the closest study."—GEORGE

"O NIGHTINGALE! THOU SURELY ART"

According to Wordsworth this poem was written at Grasmere, where no nightingales are found; but Mrs. Wordsworth thought that it was written at Coleorton, in Leicestershire, the residence of the poet's friend Sir George Beaumont. Other poems on the nightingale have been written by Milton, by Coleridge, by Keats, and by Robert Bridges.

LAODAMIA

As Wordsworth was reading Latin with his eldest son the idea of this poem came to him. "The incident of the trees growing and withering," he says, "put the subject into my thoughts, and I wrote with

the hope of giving it a loftier tone than, so far as I know, has been given to it by any of the Ancients who have treated of it. It cost me more trouble than almost anything of equal length I have ever written."

Before the rising morn: Sacrifices to the deities of the infernal regions, according to Virgil, were made between midnight and dawn.

Expects: used here in the original sense of "awaits."

Mercury: the Greek Hermes, the messenger of the gods and the conductor of souls. For full accounts of him and other gods see any good manual of mythology.

Parcæ: the Fates.

Erebus: a part of the lower world; the term is often used of the entire lower regions.

Alcestis: the heroine of Euripides' tragedy, who gave her life to save her husband, Admetus, from death. Hercules, who was her husband's guest at the time, waited at the tomb and fought off Death when he came to claim her soul. The wife who was thus restored to life has often been referred to by the poets. Among other such references see Milton's sonnet to his deceased wife, beginning :

"Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave."

Stygian hue: The Styx was the river which flowed around the underworld and which had to be crossed by all souls on their way to their final abode; hence "Stygian hue" means the hue of death.

Æson: the father of Jason. He was restored to youth by the magic of Medea, daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis.

Fleet at Aulis: The Greek fleet could not get a favorable wind for sailing away to Troy until Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, was offered as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of Diana.

Was doomed: Wordsworth originally had Laodamia go to the abode of the blessed, but this seemed to him inappropriate. He thus justifies the punishment which he metes out to her according to the present ending: "As first written, the heroine was dismissed to happiness in Elysium. To what purpose then the mission of Protesilaus? He exhorts her to moderate her passion; the exhortation is fruitless, and no punishment follows. So it stood: at present she is placed among unhappy ghosts for disregard of the exhortation. Virgil also places her there." Wordsworth appears, by the phrase "to wear out her appointed time," to mean that Laodamia went to some place like Purgatory, to remain until she had expiated her sin.

"SURPRISED BY JOY—IMPATIENT AS THE WIND"

Wordsworth says that this sonnet was suggested by the death of his daughter Catherine, long after her death. She was, according to De Quincey, an unusually attractive and promising child.

"‘THERE!’ SAID A STRIPLING, POINTING WITH MEET PRIDE"

Wordsworth's Fenwick note to this poem begins thus: "Mossgiel was thus pointed out to me by a young man on the top of a coach on my way from Glasgow to Kilmarnock."

The Daisy: See Burns's beautiful poem "To a Mountain Daisy" for this and other references in this poem.

Arran: a mountainous island in the Firth of Clyde, off the west coast of Ayrshire.

Bield: shelter.

"WHY ART THOU SILENT! IS THY LOVE A PLANT"

"In the month of January, when Dora and I were walking from Town-end, Grasmere, across the vale, snow being on the ground, she espied, in the thick though leafless hedge, a bird's nest half filled with snow. Out of this comfortless appearance arose this Sonnet, which was, in fact, written without the least reference to any individual object, but merely to prove to myself that I could, if I thought fit, write in a strain that Poets have been fond of. On the 14th of February in the same year, my daughter, in a sportive mood, sent it as a Valentine, under a fictitious name, to her cousin C. W."—WORDSWORTH

EXTEMPORE EFFUSION UPON THE DEATH OF JAMES HOGG

"These verses were written extempore, immediately after reading a notice of the Ettrick Shepherd's death in the Newcastle paper, to the Editor of which I sent a copy for publication. The persons lamented in these verses were all either of my friends or acquaintance. In Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott* an account is given of my first meeting with him in 1803. How the Ettrick Shepherd and I became known to each other has already been mentioned in these notes. He was undoubtedly a man of original genius, but of coarse manners and low and offensive opinions. Of Coleridge and Lamb I need not speak here. Crabbe I have met in London, at Mr. Rogers's, but more frequently and

favourably at Mr. Hoare's upon Hampstead Heath. Every spring he used to pay that family a visit of some length, and was upon terms of intimate friendship with Mrs. Hoare, and still more with her daughter-in-law, who has a large collection of his letters addressed to herself. After the Poet's decease, application was made to her to give up these letters to his biographer, that they, or at least part of them, might be given to the public. She hesitated to comply, and asked my opinion on the subject.

"'By no means,' was my answer, grounded not upon any objection there might be to publishing a selection from these letters, but from an aversion I have always felt to meet idle curiosity by calling back the recently departed to become the object of trivial and familiar gossip. Crabbe obviously for the most part preferred the company of women to that of men, for this among other reasons, that he did not like to be put upon the stretch in general conversation: accordingly in miscellaneous society his *talk* was so much below what might have been expected from a man so deservedly celebrated, that to me it seemed trifling. It must upon other occasions have been of a different character, as I found in our rambles together on Hampstead Heath, and not so much from a readiness to communicate his knowledge of life and manners as of natural history in all its branches. His mind was inquisitive, and he seems to have taken refuge from the remembrance of the distresses he had gone through, in these studies and the employments to which they led. Moreover, such contemplations might tend profitably to counterbalance the painful truths which he had collected from his intercourse with mankind. Had I been more intimate with him, I should have ventured to touch upon his office as a minister of the Gospel, and how far his heart and soul were in it so as to make him a zealous and diligent labourer: in poetry, though he wrote much, as we all know, he assuredly was not so. I happened once to speak of pains as necessary to produce merit of a certain kind which I highly valued: his observation was—'It is not worth while.' You are quite right, thought I, if the labour encroaches upon the time due to teach truth as a steward of the mysteries of God: if there be cause to fear *that*, write less: but, if poetry is to be produced at all, make what you do produce as good as you can. Mr. Rogers once told me that he expressed his regret to Crabbe that he wrote in his later works so much less correctly than in his earlier. 'Yes,' replied he, 'but then I had a reputation to make; now I can afford to relax.' Whether it was from a modest estimate of his own qualifications, or from causes less creditable, his motives for writing verse and his hopes and aims were not so high as is to be desired. After being silent for more than twenty years, he again ap-

plied himself to poetry, upon the spur of applause he received from the periodical publications of the day, as he himself tells us in one of his prefaces. Is it not to be lamented that a man who was so conversant with permanent truth, and whose writings are so valuable an acquisition to our country's literature, should have *required* an impulse from such a quarter?—Mrs. Hemans was unfortunate as a poetess in being obliged by circumstances to write for money, and that so frequently and so much, that she was compelled to look out for subjects wherever she could find them, and to write as expeditiously as possible. As a woman, she was to a considerable degree a spoilt child of the world. She had been early in life distinguished for talent, and poems of hers were published while she was a girl. She had also been handsome in her youth, but her education had been most unfortunate. She was totally ignorant of housewifery, and could as easily have managed the spear of Minerva as her needle. It was from observing these deficiencies, that, one day while she was under my roof, I *purposely* directed her attention to household economy, and told her I had purchased *Scales*, which I intended to present to a young lady as a wedding present; pointed out their utility (for her especial benefit), and said that no *ménage* ought to be without them. Mrs. Hemans, not in the least suspecting my drift, reported this saying, in a letter to a friend at the time, as a proof of my simplicity. Being disposed to make large allowances for the faults of her education and the circumstances in which she was placed, I felt most kindly disposed towards her, and took her part upon all occasions, and I was not a little affected by learning that after she withdrew to Ireland, a long and severe sickness raised her spirit as it depressed her body. This I heard from her most intimate friends, and there is striking evidence of it in a poem written and published not long before her death. These notices of Mrs. Hemans would be very unsatisfactory to her intimate friends, as indeed they are to myself, not so much for what is said, but what for brevity's sake is left unsaid. Let it suffice to add, there was much sympathy between us, and, if opportunity had been allowed me to see more of her, I should have loved and valued her accordingly; as it is, I remember her with true affection for her amiable qualities, and, above all, for her delicate and irreproachable conduct during her long separation from an unfeeling husband, whom she had been led to marry from the romantic notions of inexperienced youth. Upon this husband I never heard her cast the least reproach, nor did I ever hear her even name him, though she did not wholly forbear to touch upon her domestic position; but never so as that any fault could be found with her manner of adverting to it.”—WORDSWORTH

ARNOLD'S ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH

(For authors referred to in this essay see Volume IX of the Century Dictionary, or any other dictionary of proper names)

Page 130 line 6. *Rydal Mount*: Wordsworth's home overlooking Rydal Water, in the Lake District. See Introduction, p. 22.

130 9. "*Guide to the Lakes*": a very interesting prose work by Wordsworth. The descriptions of scenery show the delicate appreciation of the poet for the subtle beauties of nature.

130 12. 1842: the year in which Tennyson won recognition as one of the greatest poets by the new edition of his *Poems* in two volumes. The collection contained many of the finest poems he ever wrote.

132 8. *Candid friend*: The candid friend is Arnold himself. His satire on his countrymen is found especially in *Culture and Anarchy* and in *Friendship's Garland*.

132 30. *The old "Biographie Universelle"*: This French work was published in 1781.

133 26. "*Samson Agonistes*": a drama written on the model of the Greek tragedies, with choruses and long declamatory speeches. In sustained grandeur it is very much in the manner of the Greeks.

133 34. *Amphictyonic Court*: The amphictyonic council of the ancient Greeks was a gathering of representatives, from tribes having a common sanctuary, to look after religious and other interests. It served by a sort of tacit consent to represent the will of the people when there was no general government of all the Greek states. Arnold means the international judgment of the Western world in matters of literary criticism.

134 14. In lines 14-33 Arnold gives reasons for assigning Wordsworth so high a place among English poets. On this subject Morley remarks: "We are not called upon to place great men of his stamp as if they were collegians in a class list. It is best to take with thankfulness and admiration from each man what he has to give. What Wordsworth does is to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. . . . But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch 'the depth and not the tumult of the soul,' to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure."

137 12. *The tact of the Greeks*: "To classify poetry, for example, Arnold adopts the Greek system; not because it is Greek, but because it is 'natural,' elemental. For the constituents of a true poem, he turns again to the Greek, as did Goethe and Coleridge, for the same reason. What Arnold takes from Greece, Greece took from nature herself,—the 'natural truth.'"—CHENEY

140 27. *Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life*: Compare the following statement from Arnold's essay "The Study of Poetry": "We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry."

143 21. *The Wordsworthians*: "The Wordsworthians were a sect, who, if they had the enthusiasm, had not a little of the exclusiveness and partiality to which sects are liable. The verses of the master had for them the virtue of religious canticles stimulant of zeal and not amenable to the ordinary tests of cold-blooded criticism. Like the hymns of the Huguenots and Covenanters, they were songs of battle no less than of worship, and the combined ardors of conviction and conflict lent them a fire that was not naturally their own."—LOWELL

147 9. *The God, the 'not ourselves'*: This is quoted from Arnold's definition of God in the first chapter of *Literature and Dogma*. The entire phrase is "the enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness."

147 31. *'This will never do'*: These were the opening words of Jeffrey's review of the *Excursion* in the *Edinburgh Review* for November, 1814. In the light of modern opinion on Wordsworth's merits the dictatorial attitude of the reviewer seems rather amusing.

150 4. *"The Highland Reaper"*: Arnold has here confused the title of this poem with that of the poem called "To a Highland Girl." The correct title is "The Solitary Reaper."

If Arnold's estimate of Wordsworth be just—and who will gainsay it?—we owe him a debt smaller only than that due the poet himself. It required a mind open as the poet's own, a spirit as responsive to the rhythmic beat of universal life, to see and know him as he is; it required the ability that distinguishes Matthew Arnold as a critic.—

CHENEY

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

In studying Wordsworth's poems your chief aim should be to enjoy them. That is what poetry is for, particularly lyric poetry. As most of these poems of Wordsworth's are lyrics, it is well, first of all, to understand what lyric poetry is. The lyric was originally meant to be sung. It is a songlike poem which reflects the personal emotion, real or imagined, of the author. As it portrays man's emotion, it may deal with any phase of life, whether love of country, love of man or woman, love of nature, the celebration of an event, or the setting forth of those high ideals toward which mankind is always striving.

Certain lyrics portraying definite moods have come to have fixed conventions. It is, therefore, convenient to know the names of the different kinds of lyrics that appear in this book, and the moods for which they stand.

The *ode* is written in celebration of some person, event, or abstract feeling, and is characterized by exaltation of feeling and elevation of style. The English, or irregular, ode shows great variety in versification and much individual freedom in the arrangement of its stanzas and its verse lengths. Pick out the odes in this collection, and see if they fulfill the requirements of the definition.

The *elegy*, a dignified, reflective lyric, laments a real or an imagined loss by death. Pick out the elegies in this collection.

The *sonnet* is a poem of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter. The *Italian* form of sonnet is used almost entirely by Wordsworth. This sonnet form consists of an octave (the first eight lines) and a sestet (the last six lines). The octave presents the problem; the sestet, the solution. The perfect Italian sonnet

has two rimes in the octave, and either two or three (which may vary in arrangement) in the sestet. The Italian sonnet may be represented graphically thus :

<i>Octave</i>		<i>Sestet</i>	
-----	[a]	-----	[c]
-----	[b]	-----	[d]
-----	[b]	-----	[e]
-----	[a]	-----	[c]
-----	[a]	-----	[d]
-----	[b]	-----	[e]
-----	[b]		
-----	[a]		

Write out the rime scheme of three of Wordsworth's sonnets. Give in a single sentence the thought of the octave ; of the sestet.

Many of you, perhaps, do not like poetry. In this age in which you are growing up, that is rather old-fashioned. How then, specifically, are you going about it to learn to like poetry better? In the first place, by reading poems aloud ; for only thus will you get the full effect of the rhythm, the sound. This rhythmical beat is probably the characteristic of poetry that has, throughout the ages, made its strongest appeal to man. Look through the few poems given in this book, reading a line here and there. Select the poems you like best because of the pleasing sound they make. Never mind whether you understand them or not. What is there in the sound of "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," p. 38, or of "My heart leaps up when I behold," p. 61, that you like? What difference is there in the sound of "Written in March," p. 62? or of "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802," p. 63?

After you have read enough poems so that you are interested in them for the sake of their pleasing sound, you are ready to turn your attention to their meaning. You have, by now, learned not

to expect the normal order of a prose sentence. You have become accustomed to the poetic use of figures of speech. You have learned to fill in words where the poet has purposely made only a half suggestion. You have learned to get a clearer meaning of the poem by visualizing the various scenes described, by noticing the appeal to the different senses, and by associating with general statements specific examples. You have come to look for the central thought or emotion of the poem, and for the definite purpose which the author had in writing it. Select several of the poems which attracted you because of their rhythm. Apply some of these specific suggestions to them, and see if the thought in them does not appeal to you as much as did the music.

In studying Wordsworth's poems remember that Wordsworth is the supreme poet of nature. He takes the simple facts of our everyday life and raises them above the commonplace, pointing out to us that we and all our petty interests are the only *real* things in the world. Slim little volumes of Wordsworth's poems were distributed to the English soldiers in France during the World War. The soldiers read them until the books fell to pieces, and then asked for more. See if you can find out why.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON INDIVIDUAL POEMS

We are Seven

1. This poem is written in ballad measure. What are the meter and the rime scheme? 2. In what ways does this poem remind you of the old ballads you have read?

Lines Written in Early Spring

1. Pick out specific lines which show that Wordsworth feels the joy in nature. 2. How does he make you feel it? 3. (a) In order to enter more fully into Wordsworth's mood, write a list of the words which make an appeal to the senses. (b) Does any one sense predominate?

To my Sister

1. Make a list of the poems in which Wordsworth mentions his sister. 2. As you go on reading, see if you can feel Dorothy Wordsworth's influence in any of the poems.

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

It is well to study this poem in detail. It is the first poem in the book of any difficulty, and it is one in which Wordsworth gives clearly the different conceptions of nature which he held from boyhood to manhood.

1. What is the verse form? 2. Give in your own words the details of the scene as pictured in the first part of the poem. 3. Explain "and connect the landscape with the quiet of the sky"; "sportive wood."

4. (a) How does a landscape affect a "blind man's eye"? (b) Compare this thought with that in the last stanza of "I wandered lonely as a cloud," on page 77. (c) Explain "purer mind."

(5) Give a specific illustration of an "unremembered pleasure" of your own. 6. What, according to Wordsworth, makes up the "best portion of a good man's life"? 7. What is the antecedent of "them" on page 33, line 32?

8. What is meant by "sylvan Wye"? 9. Give in your own words the way nature affected Wordsworth when he was a young man (page 35, lines 2-13). 10. Give a concrete example of an "interest unborrowed from the eye." 11. What is the "abundant recompence" which has come to Wordsworth? 12. In what sense is nature the "anchor," "nurse," "guide," "guardian," "soul"? 13. Paraphrase the passage from page 35, line 18 ("For I have learned"), to page 36, line 7. 14. Memorize this passage.

15. Paraphrase page 36, lines 21-30. 16. Explain "when thy mind shall be a mansion for all lovely forms." 17. Do we need others to share our joy in order to get the most out of nature? Read the last line of the poem. 18. Now reread the entire poem. Has the detailed study made you like it more, or less?

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways"

1. Read this poem aloud for its beauty of tone. 2. This poem is beautiful in its simplicity and sincerity. Memorize it.

The Fountain

1. Read in Arnold's essay what is said about this poem. 2. What poems which you have already studied in this collection are written in the same stanza form?

Michael

1. This poem is not a lyric, as are most in this collection. It is a narrative poem: it tells a story. What other narrative poems have you read? 2. What is the verse form? 3. Tell the story of Michael.

"My heart leaps up when I behold"

1. Paraphrase this poem. 2. Memorize it.

"I grieved for Buonaparté"

1. Write out the rime scheme of this sonnet. Comment on the irregularities. 2. Notice the date of this poem. What was Napoleon doing? 3. Does Wordsworth think that Napoleon has true wisdom? true power? If so, why?

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

1. Write out the rime scheme of this sonnet. 2. Memorize the poem. 3. Give in one sentence the thought of the octave; of the sestet. 4. Do you like the simile in the fourth line? 5. What does "silent, bare" modify? 6. Explain the last line.

"It is a beauteous evening, calm and free"

1. (a) What contrast is there between the idea of the first five lines and that of the next three? (b) between the octave as a whole and the sestet? 2. Explain "Abraham's bosom"; "worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine."

Written in London, September, 1802

1. Do you think the wealth and display of city life is wrong? Give reasons for your answer. 2. Give a specific example of the "handy-work" of "craftsman," "cook," "groom."

London, 1802

1. Paraphrase this poem. 2. Memorize it. 3. What is the subject of "have forfeited"? 4. Why does Wordsworth say of Milton, "Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea"?

"When I have borne in memory"

1. What is the subject of the first sentence? the object? 2. Explain "change swords for ledgers, and desert the student's bower for gold"; "unfilial fears."

To the Daisy

1. What is the subject of the first sentence? 2. Put in a sentence the meaning of the second stanza. 3. Make a list of the different things to which Wordsworth likens the daisy. 4. What does

"cyclops" mean? Do you like the metaphor? 5. What is the syntax of "some faery bold"? of "a share of thy meek nature"?

The Green Linnet

1. What is a "covert"? 2. What are the subject and the verb in the first sentence of the third stanza? 3. Put in your own words the thought of the last four lines of the fourth stanza. 4. Comment on the line "A Brother of the dancing leaves."

To a Highland Girl

1. Comment on the verse form. 2. Enumerate the different details of scenery in the picture. 3. Explain the allusion to the freedom of a "Mountaineer." 4. (a) What qualities does Wordsworth attribute to this girl? (b) Is it possible to tell so much about one by one's appearance? (c) Are these qualities essentially those of a country girl?

The Solitary Reaper

1. Notice the rime scheme of the different stanzas. 2. Memorize the first stanza. 3. What does Wordsworth think may be the subject of her song? Name some specific songs that she might have been singing. 4. How much of this poem is objective description and how much subjective impression? 5. Of what picture does this poem remind you? 6. In order to see more clearly the picture Wordsworth describes, pause on the following details: Why "melancholy" strain? Why "Nightingale"? Why "shady" haunt? Why "Arabian" sands? Why "Cuckoo-bird"? Where are the Hebrides?

Yarrow Unvisited

1. You must have visited some place which you had always wanted to visit. (a) Were you disappointed when you finally went? (b) Is a thing of the imagination better than the actual thing? 2. How many rivers are mentioned in this poem? How many animals? 3. Explain "blithe"; "needful"; "float double"; "freezing years." 4. Do you agree with what Wordsworth says in the last two lines of the next to the last stanza?

To the Cuckoo

1. (a) How many poems about birds are there in the book? (b) Which one do you like best? Why? (c) Are you familiar with any of these birds? 2. Explain "New-comer"; "twofold shout." 3. What is the chief pleasure Wordsworth gets from the cuckoo's song?

"She was a phantom of delight"

1. What lines of this poem have you heard quoted? 2. (a) Describe Mrs. Wordsworth's appearance from details given here. (b) Make a list of her qualities. 3. Make a list of the different metaphors Wordsworth uses in describing his wife. 4. Explain the last line of the first stanza; the fifth and sixth lines of the second stanza. 5. Comment on the word "machine."

"I wandered lonely as a cloud"

1. Memorize this poem. 2. Why "continuous" as stars? Why the "milky way"? Why "ten thousand"? Why did not Wordsworth say a "multitude" instead? 3. Compare the thought of the last stanza with that in "Tintern Abbey." 4. How does Wordsworth make us feel the joy in nature in this poem?

The Small Celandine

1. Pick out the subject, verb, and object of the subordinate clause in the second line of the second stanza. 2. Make a list of the various flowers Wordsworth mentions. Does he like any one better than the others? 3. What flowers do you know that have the same characteristics as the celandine? 4. Why was the flower changed? Explain "in my spleen." 6. Paraphrase the last stanza.

Ode to Duty

1. Does this poem fulfill the requirements of an ode? 2. Do you like the personification here? 3. How is duty "victory and law"? 4. Explain "From vain temptations dost set free"; "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong." 5. (a) Paraphrase the second stanza. (b) About what kind of people is Wordsworth talk-

ing? 6. What does Wordsworth say in the fourth stanza about his own attitude toward duty? 7. (a) In the fifth line of the fifth stanza, what is the subject and what is the object? (b) What is the syntax of "myself" in the second line of the last stanza? 8. Do you agree with Wordsworth that if you followed duty you would have a "repose that ever is the same"? 9. Do you usually think of duty as described in the sixth stanza?

Elegiac Stanzas

1. Explain the last line of the first stanza; the last line of the second stanza; "it seemed no sleep"; "Elysian"; "that Hulk." 2. Notice the familiar line "The light that never was, on sea or land." Explain the meaning. 3. How does distress "humanise" the soul?

Admonition

1. What makes the cottage and its surroundings so beautiful? 2. Why would this beauty disappear if Wordsworth went to live in the cottage?

"The world is too much with us"

1. Paraphrase this poem. 2. Memorize it. 3. (a) Do you believe that a pagan gets more enjoyment out of nature than does a person who is absorbed in business? (b) Does Wordsworth believe this? (c) Does civilization add to or detract from our powers of appreciation?

To Sleep

1. Have you ever used any of Wordsworth's devices in trying to get to sleep? 2. Explain the last two lines.

Ode on the Intimations of Immortality

1. What is the meaning of the word "intimations"? 2. Remember that as Wordsworth pictures it, immortality is not only life after death but life before birth. Because the child is nearer to this preëxistent state, some of the glory of it still surrounds him. Explain the last line of the second stanza. 3. (a) Do you agree with Wordsworth that something does pass away with childhood?

(b) Are you as excited the night before Christmas as you used to be? If not, why not? 4. Read the lines in which Wordsworth says that nature is just the same, but that he has changed. 5. Did someone else give a "timely utterance" or did Wordsworth himself? 6. Explain how Wordsworth's griefs can wrong the seasons; explain "fields of sleep." 7. What is the "something that is gone"?

8. Memorize stanza V. 9. What does Wordsworth say in this stanza about the young child? 10. What is the "prison-house"? 11. Whence does "the light" flow? 12. What is the "vision splendid"? 13. What are the "pleasures" of earth? 14. (a) Who is the "Nurse"? (b) What is she trying to do to man? 15. Give in your own words the thought in stanza VII. 16. Who is the "Thou" in the first line of stanza VIII? 17. What is his "heritage"? 18. To whom does the pronoun "we" in the ninth line of stanza VIII refer? 19. Explain "provoke the years to bring the inevitable yoke."

20. (a) For what is Wordsworth thankful in stanza IX? (b) Give specific examples of these things. 21. What is the recompense of age? 22. Memorize and explain the last two lines of the poem.

Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland

1. Why do we always picture seafaring people and mountaineers as free? 2. Who is the "Tyrant"? 3. Explain the ninth line. 4. Who is the "high-souled Maid"?

"O Nightingale! thou surely art"

1. Comment on the verse form. 2. Who is the "God of wine"? 3. Of what does the nightingale sing? 4. Compare the stock-dove's song with that of the nightingale.

Laodamia

Read the story of Laodamia and Protesiláus in a classical dictionary, and be ready to report to the class.

"Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind"

1. What might it have been that Wordsworth turned to share with his daughter? 2. Do you believe that we need sympathetic

companionship in order to enjoy to the full a beautiful object, an interesting experience, etc.?

To a Sky-lark

1. What two questions does Wordsworth ask the lark? 2. What is the difference between the lark and the nightingale? 3. (a) Compare all the poems in this book about birds. (b) Which bird does Wordsworth like best? (c) Which does he know best?

"*There!*" said a Stripling, pointing with meet pride"

Give in a sentence the meaning of this poem.

Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg

1. Who was the "Ettrick Shepherd"? the "Border-minstrel"? "Her," in the next to the last stanza? 2. Explain the seventh and ninth stanzas.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON THE POEMS

1. Pick out five poems in which Wordsworth portrays the life of humble folk.

2. Pick out five poems which show that Wordsworth chose incidents from everyday life as subjects for his poems.

3. Pick out five poems which illustrate Wordsworth's theory that the ordinary language of the people is the language to use in poetry.

4. Were there fewer words in Wordsworth that you had to look up than, for instance, in Milton? If so, why?

5. List the different flowers and birds Wordsworth mentions.

6. Do you think that living nature (flowers, animals, etc.) appealed more strongly to Wordsworth than did inanimate nature (lakes, mountains, etc.)? Point out passages that support your answer.

7. (a) Is Wordsworth accurate in his portrayal of the details of nature? (b) Does it matter in poetry whether one is or not?

8. Does Wordsworth look at nature from the point of view of a scientist or from that of a poet?

9. Arnold emphasizes Wordsworth's "healing power." Pick out specific lines which bring out this quality.

QUESTIONS ON THE ESSAY AS APPLIED TO THE POEMS

These questions follow in general the outline of the essay (pp. 127-128)

1. Do you prefer Scott's, Byron's, or Tennyson's poems to Wordsworth's? Give examples. Have any two of these poets traits in common?

2. *a.* What poems of Wordsworth's, because they refer specifically to other nations or because they voice universal ideas, would have an international appeal?

b. Wordsworth lived during the time of the French Revolution and the American Revolution. What poems reflect the idea of "liberté, égalité, fraternité"?

3. *a.* What qualities does Shakespeare's or Milton's work possess which Wordsworth's does not?

b. Has Wordsworth any qualities in common with Shakespeare and Milton? What of Shakespeare's music? of Milton's classic touch?

c. What is your opinion of trying to give relative ranks to poets? Do you agree to putting Wordsworth ahead of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning?

4. If a poet has written some inferior poems, should they detract from his fame? Do you consider any of the poems included here poor?

5. *a.* Comment on Arnold's standard of great poetry, the application of ideas to life. Illustrate your comment by citing modern poems that you like.

b. Show where and how Wordsworth applies ideas to life—ideas of duty, joy, sacrifice, etc.

6. *a.* Comment on Arnold's statement that Wordsworth's greatness lies in the fact that he treats *more* of life.

b. Point out different aspects of life on which Wordsworth touches.

c. Was the variety of Wordsworth's ideas owing to his own life experience?

7. Show how Wordsworth's poetry justifies Voltaire's idea of English poetry.

8. *a.* In what poems does Wordsworth "feel the joy" of life?

b. Does he make *you* have the same feeling?

c. From what different sources does this joy come?

9. Point out poems which show a variety in style. Do you agree that Wordsworth had no fixed style, as had Shakespeare or Milton?

10. *a.* Comment on Arnold's choice of three characteristic poems of Wordsworth.

b. Which poems would you choose?

11. Sum up Wordsworth's good qualities and his weaknesses. Name poems to illustrate.

QUESTIONS ON ARNOLD AND WORDSWORTH

1. What had Arnold and Wordsworth in common: (*a*) in life? (*b*) in ideas? (*c*) in poetry?

2. Why is Wordsworth a greater poet than Arnold?

3. Would one have to be a poet to write Arnold's criticism of Wordsworth?

4. Which is the juster estimate of Wordsworth, Arnold's essay or his poem on pages 24-25? Explain Wordsworth's "healing power."

5. *a.* Are Arnold's standards of criticism just? Apply them to poems you especially like.

b. Does Arnold, in emphasizing the importance of the "moral" side of poetry, underestimate the value of the lighter graces?

6. Is Arnold greater as poet or critic?

QUESTIONS FROM THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD¹

1. *a.* What representative ideas of Wordsworth are found in the following poems?

"The Daffodils" ("I wandered lonely as a cloud")

"The Reverie of Poor Susan"

"The Reaper"

"The World is Too Much with Us"

b. In what other poets of the period are there similar ideas? Illustrate.

2. *a.* What resemblance do you find between "The Reaper" and "To the Highland Girl of Inversneyde"? Who wrote these two poems?

b. Name four odes you have studied in Book IV of *The Golden Treasury*. Give the author of each.

[Wordsworth's "To a Skylark" quoted]

3. *a.* Why is "To a Skylark" correctly classed as a lyric? How does it differ in form from a sonnet?

b. If the poem contains a prominent idea, express it as definitely as you can in a sentence or two.

c. In what respect is the poem characteristic of Wordsworth rather than of Shelley?

4. *a.* Paraphrase the following sonnet by Wordsworth, restating each idea in simple prose:

["The World is Too Much with Us" quoted]

b. What is Wordsworth's attitude toward the spirit of commercialism in life? What is his attitude toward nature?

5. *a.* Choose one of the following poets: Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning. Mention several of his poems which you have read.

b. What passages of these poems do you remember most clearly? What qualities make these passages memorable?

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c. From these poems quote ten or fifteen lines. What qualities make these lines worth memorizing?

6. Compare some lyric poems by Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley with regard to their choice and treatment of subjects.

7. Contrast any two poets, or any two poems, that appeal to you strongly but for different reasons.

8. Some qualities or characteristics of lyric poetry seen in specific poems of Wordsworth.

9. Briefly show how, in choice of subjects and in other respects, the lyric differs from other kinds of poetry. (You may illustrate your answer by referring by title to poems, by quoting single lines or short passages, or by using a longer continuous passage.)

10. a. Select *two* of the following literary types—drama, lyric, novel, allegory, essay.

b. Comment fully upon the distinguishing features of these two types.

11. What are the qualities of lyric poetry? Mention examples from Book IV of *The Golden Treasury* of (i) an ode, (ii) a sonnet, (iii) a song.

12. From essays, biographies, or letters read in preparation for this examination, what specific suggestions have you received concerning effective writing in one of these forms?

13. What interest and value do you find in essays or biographies? Defend or attack one of these kinds of writing in one or more well-constructed paragraphs, referring to essays or biographies not already mentioned in this paper.

14. In what ways does an oration differ from an essay? Illustrate your answer by specific examples.

15. Write about some essay, or oration, which you have studied, and tell what ideas and what qualities of style have impressed you.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The most important editions of Wordsworth's various works are the following:

Prose Works, edited by A. B. Grosart. 1876.

Poems of Wordsworth, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold. 1879.

Poetical Works (in eight volumes), edited by William Knight. 1882-1886.

Prose Writings, edited by William Knight. 1888.

Poetical Works (in seven volumes), with memoir, edited by E. Dowden. 1892-1893.

Poems by Wordsworth, a selection, edited by E. Dowden. 1897.

Excellent single-volume editions of the poems are the Macmillan edition, by John Morley; the Oxford Wordsworth, by Thomas Hutchinson; and the Cambridge Edition, by A. J. George.

The most important biographies of Wordsworth are (1) that by his nephew Christopher Wordsworth; (2) that by Professor Knight; (3) that by G. M. Harper, entitled *William Wordsworth, His Life, Works, and Influence*. The best short life is that in the English Men of Letters Series, by Mr. Myers. An interesting recent contribution to biographical knowledge of Wordsworth is Émile Legouis's *The Early Life of Wordsworth* (Revised Edition).

Of the numerous critical essays on Wordsworth the best are found in the following works: Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*; De Quincey's *Essays on the Poets* etc.; Lowell's *Among my Books*; Masson's *Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats*; Shairp's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy and Aspects of Poetry*; Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library* (Third Series); R. H. Hutton's *Essays, Theological and Literary*; Stopford Brooke's *Theology in the English Poets*; Dowden's *Studies in Literature and Transcripts and Studies*; W. Bagehot's *Literary Studies*; Aubrey de Vere's *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*; Dean Church's *Dante and Other Essays*; and Walter Pater's *Appreciations*.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1. The following are the chief works of Matthew Arnold, with their dates of publication:

- The Strayed Reveler.* 1849.
Empedocles on Etna. 1852.
Poems. 1853.
Poems (Second Series). 1855.
Merope. 1858.
Popular Education in France. 1861.
On Translating Homer. 1861.
A French Eton. 1864.
Essays in Criticism. 1865.
On the Study of Celtic Literature. 1867.
New Poems. 1867.
Schools and Universities on the Continent. 1868.
Culture and Anarchy. 1869.
St. Paul and Protestantism. 1870.
Friendship's Garland. 1871.
Literature and Dogma. 1873.
God and the Bible. 1875.
Last Essays on Church and Religion. 1877.
Mixed Essays. 1879.
Irish Essays. 1882.
Discourses in America. 1885.
Essays in Criticism (Second Series). 1888.
Civilization in the United States. 1888.

2. The standard edition of Matthew Arnold is the series of volumes by The Macmillan Company. They issue also a single-volume edition of his poems entitled *Poetical Works*.

3. The principal biographical and critical works dealing with Matthew Arnold are these:

- BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE. *Res Judicatae*.
 BLACKIE, J. S. "Homer and his Translators," in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Vol. IV, pp. 268-280.
 BROWNELL, W. C. "Matthew Arnold," in *Victorian Prose Masters*.
 FITCH, SIR J. G. *Matthew Arnold*.
 FORMAN. "Arnold," in *Our Living Poets*.

- GATES, LEWIS E. "Matthew Arnold," in *Three Studies in Literature*.
- HARRISON, FREDERICK. *Tennyson, Ruskin, and Other Literary Estimates*.
- HUDSON, W. H. *Studies in Interpretation*.
- HUTTON, R. H. "The Poetry of Matthew Arnold," in *Essays Theological and Literary*, Vol. II.
- LANG, ANDREW. "Matthew Arnold," in *Century Magazine*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 849-864.
- PAUL, HERBERT W. *Matthew Arnold*, in English Men of Letters Series.
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- SIDGWICK, HENRY. "The Prophet of Culture," in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Vol. XVI, pp. 271-280.
- SMART, T. B. *The Bibliography of Matthew Arnold*.
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- TRAILL, H. D. "Matthew Arnold," in *Contemporary Reviews*, Vol. LIII, pp. 868-881.
- WOODBERRY, GEORGE E. *Makers of Literature*.

Mod. Cl. { adj.
 { adv.

noun cl. { as subj.
 { as subj. comp.
 { as direct obj.
In apposition with no

